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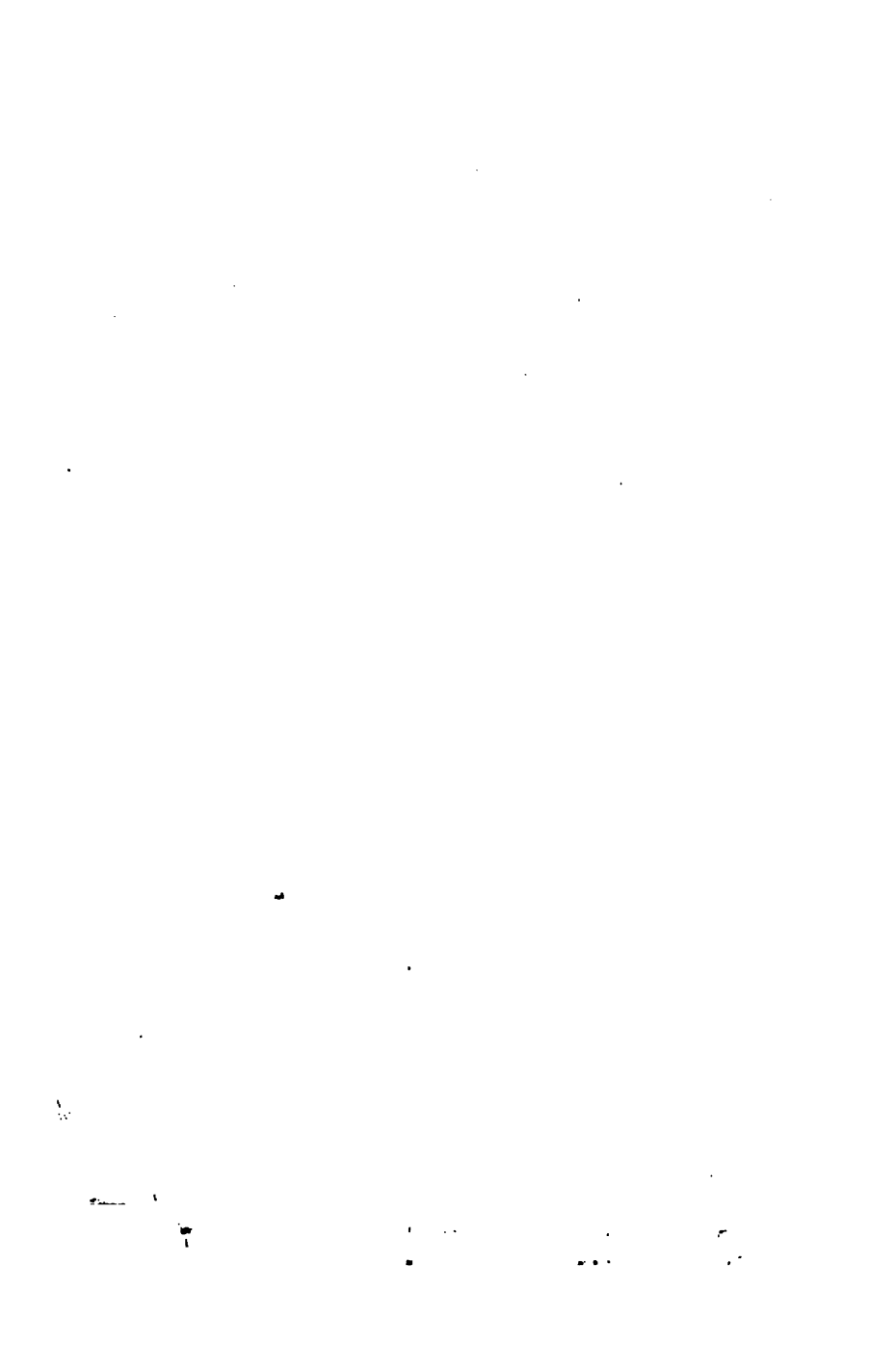
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THE BEATITUDES

OF THE KINGDOM

*J. OSWALD DYKES M.A.*



## THE BEATITUDES.

**MURRAY AND GIBB, EDINBURGH,  
PRINTERS TO HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE**

THE  
BEATITUDES OF THE KINGDOM.

BY  
J. OSWALD DYKES, M.A.

*Das ist ja ein feiner, süßer, freundlicher Anfang Seiner Lehre  
und Predigt.*—LUTHER.

*Omnes ordine enumerantur pulcherrimo.*—BENGEL.

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TO MY  
REGENT SQUARE CONGREGATION,  
FOR WHOSE PROFIT  
THIS ATTEMPT WAS FIRST MADE TO TRACE  
THE TRUE SENSE AND INNER CONNECTION OF CHRIST'S  
EIGHT WORDS OF BLESSING,  
THE PAGES WHICH FOLLOW ARE  
AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.





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THE BEATITUDES OF  
THE KINGDOM.

*His fame went throughout all Syria : and they brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy ; and He healed them. And there followed Him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan. And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain ; and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him : and He opened His mouth, and taught them.—MATT. IV. 24—V. 2.*

*It came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called unto Him His disciples : and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named Apostles ; Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James [the son] of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes, and Judas [the brother] of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor. And He came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of His disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the sea-coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear Him, and to be healed of their diseases ; and they that were vexed with unclean spirits : and they were healed. And the whole multitude sought to touch Him ; for there went virtue out of Him, and healed them all. And He lifted up His eyes on His disciples, and said——*  
LUKE VI. 12-20.

## HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION.

**J**ESUS had been for very nearly a whole year a public teacher in Judea and Jerusalem before He went down to the province of Galilee to commence His ministrations there. Though we do not know very much of that earlier stage in His work, we know the issue of it. It closed abruptly in an open rupture with the influential and orthodox leaders of the Hebrew people. The scribes and Pharisees 'persecuted Jesus, and sought to slay Him,' because of the Bethesda miracle done on the Sabbath-day. Rejected thus in the capital by the national rulers, Jesus retired to the northern province, and threw Himself on the sympathies of the common people. He settled in the business town of Capernaum, and had at the outset signal success. He became popular. It was against the importunities of the citizens that He one Sunday morning tore Himself from them, for the sake of visiting other towns and villages lying in the vicinity. From that short

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John v. 16.

Luke iv. 40ff.

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tour He returned to His own city of Capernaum towards the end of the same week; but during His absence it would seem that matters had somewhat changed. The crowd, indeed, was as simple-hearted and friendly in its welcome as ever; but a number of doctors and Pharisees from a distance had arrived with no good intent—some from the capital, some from other parts of Judea—sent most probably by the ruling party in Jerusalem. If we keep in view that the influential leaders of the pharisaic sect in Jerusalem had only a few weeks before decided against Jesus, and driven Him away by threats to kill Him, we shall understand the meaning of this new move on their part. They could not allow Him to have it all His own way among the people of the northern province; therefore they had sent down after Him a deputation of their own to watch Him and concert with the local Pharisees against Him, in order to counterwork and damage His influence among the people.

This band of professed adversaries first appears in Jesus' own house at Capernaum, immediately Luke v. 17 ff. on His return from His preaching circuit. They murmured there at His forgiving the sins of the paralytic. They followed Him when, later in the same day, He called Matthew from his custom-

Luke v. 27-30; cf. Matt. ix. 9.

house by the lake. They remonstrated with the disciples that evening, because Jesus sat down among Matthew's fellow-publicans at his farewell supper-party. The first following Sabbath, the same men lay on the catch as His disciples went through the standing corn and rubbed its fast-hardening ears. And soon after there fell a legal Sabbath or Holy Day, when they made a public opportunity of challenging Jesus Himself to repeat at Capernaum the Sabbath-breaking act of mercy for which He had been condemned at Jerusalem. Jesus did so. He healed the withered hand; and these emissaries from headquarters seem to have reached the extreme of rage and malice. 'They were filled with madness,' and took counsel with their political rivals, the Herodian faction, how to accomplish His destruction.

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Luke vi. 1.

Luke vi. 6ff.

Luke vi. 11;  
cf. Mark iii.  
6.

'In those days' it was, as Luke emphatically notes; just on the back of a coalition of enemies so formidable; when Jewish enmity had broken into Galilee to poison its more honest population, and, as He foresaw, to alienate the people from His side; when by so much the cross was drawing nearer, and His own public teaching growing hazardous: then 'it came to pass' that He chose the Twelve. This measure was, so to speak, His answer to the enemy, the revenge of



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His love. As they have advanced a step, so He. They strengthen themselves with allies, so will He: and the more men seek to crush out the kingdom of God in its very birth, the more will His divine grace provide for its maintenance and propagation. Yes, Him they may destroy: but in His room there shall be Twelve; and from the Twelve, how many more! Up till this time it can hardly be said the kingdom of God was set up. True, He had spoken a great deal about His Messiahship and His kingdom; but He preached, like John, a kingdom to come. He had drawn a number of followers to believe in Him, and had even called a few of them to leave their trades and be His constant attendants; but there was as yet neither office nor organization nor authority; in a word, no kingdom. Preaching there was, not rule; words which might alarm ecclesiastical officials indeed, but no overt act of which the law could take notice; the prophet's part played, not the king's. Now there is an end to this. He takes exceedingly solemn and marked action. He selects a band of special ministers, equal in number to the twelve tribes of the Hebrew kingdom; He invests them with office, not to preach simply, but to rule under Him the kingdom of God. To that end

He binds them to His person as their Chief or King. He formally commissions them with supernatural powers as their official equipment; and through them He promulgates, in legislative accents, the constitutional principles of the kingdom. At the hour of His widest popularity, yet at a crisis of gathering peril, in face of the people and the adversary together, He virtually sets up His kingdom, arrogates kingly rights, and, for the first time, commits Himself to the consequences of His claims to be God's Christ. It was a moment of decision. It was a policy of safety, because a policy of boldness. It was an act of calm, foresighted courage, full in its simplicity of the moral sublime.

Let us gather up and realize the circumstances.

In the first place, our Lord's night-long preparation for this step is worthy of devout attention.

We do not know if it was quite alone, or if, more probably, with the band of His now constant companions, that He withdrew to that mountain's brow which overlooked lake and town. But if they did try to watch with Him and pray, <sup>Luke xxii. 41.</sup> not one, but many hours, must it not have been, as it were, about a stone-cast off? Who could be His fellow there? The veil of loneliness and

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of night is on that prayer. What hand dare lift it? Yet if, as we see, there was risk in the thing He was about to do; and if the doing of it was to lay the undermost stones of His kingdom, and be the first act of His kingdom, and open up all His church's coming history; if, as we know, 'the Son could do nothing of Himself, but what,' with the prayer-purged eye of a human faith, 'He saw the Father do,'—may we not humbly venture, so far at least, into that night's solitary and sacred communings? Courage to go forward, irreversibly, with deepening shadow on His way; wisdom to choose those whom His Father had chosen, and had given Him for that end: can the Son of God be true brother to us all if at such an hour He needs not to ask these things for Himself? And for them, that they might rise to the height of their high calling, not puffed up, but divinely filled with grace and lowly power; till all—all save one—should be found finally not unworthy of this ministry and apostleship. And for us, and for all the long line of Christian generations to be built up on these Twelve Foundations, believing through their word: may we not so read that long night-prayer of consecration and of intercession by our Priest and King? A lone dark watch on the cool hill-

John v. 19.

Rev. xxi. 14.

top, with the stars of God looking calmly down on Him, and the great lake spread silently out below, as far from earthly care and sin, as near the heavens in their pureness, as may be,—behold the oratory of the Son of God !

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When morning broke over the dark wall of the opposite shore, it showed Him pale from sleeplessness, but serene from prayer. Beneath Him, on the hill-side, was the gathering of His disciples. Man by man, He ‘called whom He would by name;’ and man by man, the Elect Twelve left their wondering companions to take their places by the Master’s side, to be for ever now chief counsellors in His kingdom, the next in honour and the next in danger. Most of them have been heard of already in the narrative : Simon the Rock and his lesser brother, with the two Sons of Thunder, whom He had called together from their fishing-nets to be four partners in the ministry ; Philip of Bethsaida and his friend Nathanael, as together a year ago they found the Christ ; two of the Lord’s own brothers and the Capernaum publican, just called two days before ; and one Simon the Zealot and Thomas ; and, last and strangest of all, that one, unsuspected as yet by any save Jesus, who was John vi. 70. ‘a devil.’ ‘The glorious company of the apostles,’

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- the church has called them in her hymn; but had we seen them that dawn, as they clustered round their King, we must have thought them a strange, unlikely, inglorious band. Twelve Galilean workmen, with average ability and the prejudices of their class; attracted, indeed, by the superiority of this Man, and yielding to His influence, but neither comprehending who He was nor what He was to do; ignorant, rude, strong-passioned, ill assorted: by these Twelve to lay the foundations of the church of God so broad and deep that on them might be built the hopes of all mankind and the destinies of a saved, regenerated earth! Did ever means seem in more foolish disproportion to the end? Yet
- 1 Cor. i. 27. He did it. These foolish things God chose to confound the wise. The might of Jesus' Spirit turned them to apostles; and to that dozen workmen on the hill, all Christendom in all time has looked back as to the planters and fathers of its faith. It is always the same. For the humbling of human pride and the practice of Christian faith, God works salvation for men by means which men despise. Look at that morning's scene as the act of God our Saviour, and it will read you this lesson, that by using earthen
- 2 Cor. iv. 7. vessels, soiled even and chipped, He would mag-

nify the treasure of His strength, which groweth 'mighty to save' through very weakness. Look at it as the great venture of the Son of Man, launching His Father's cause upon the world, and it is the grandest example of faith, setting itself to achieve the impossible by the help of the Almighty.

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At this point there seems to have occurred an interruption.

The election over, and formal ordination, through whatever ceremony, there might naturally have been expected to follow some sort of charge on the office and its work; some such words of private instruction to the sacred apostolic college, as He delivered a little later when He sent them forth on their first mission. So, perhaps, there would; but the privacy of the Saviour's retreat was never safe from invasion. Already eager crowds from the city had found Him out. Up the gorge He saw them pouring, and over the steep hill-side, bringing their sick with them; a very great multitude collected by His fame from Galilee on this side the lake and Decapolis on that, from Judea in the far south, even from the commercial centres of Phœnicia to the west and north. Such an interruption at so unseasonable a moment might have discomposed most men;

See Matt. x.,  
and Luke x.  
1-16.

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but in His holy self-possession, no call of duty seemed ever to take Him at unawares or to jar with any other engagement. Promptly He led His disciples from the summit to a little level pasture spot some way down the hill, where He met and gathered round Him the advancing people. Standing among them, He healed their sick and cast out devils and restored the infirm and lunatic. Drawn marvellously by the abundance of His grace, the whole crowd seemed to press round to touch Him, for out from Him was going forth a power which was healing all. Not till after this healing interlude, when all were gathered and their bodily need cared for and their interest secured, did He withdraw again a little way up the slope and sit down to address His disciples. There, with the Twelve in their new place beside Him, and the other disciples in front, beyond them again the vast mixed crowd of peasants and citizens, Jews and foreigners, all grouped on the level spot or round and down the bank; there, with the morning sky for temple-roof, and the hum of city business creeping up from the lake below; there 'He opened His mouth, and taught them' in the most profound and weighty sermon which the evangelists have been moved to record—'the Sermon on the Mount.'

The occasion defines its character. Spoken to His own, it was meant for all. In form, indeed, it preserves its original character as a noble inauguration charge to these first twelve confessors and officers of His kingdom. But in its contents it regards the wider audience. Even as (if one may liken such things) a constitutional monarch, like our own Queen, in addressing her senate on a state occasion, cannot forget that outside the senate hall are listening millions of British subjects, and beyond them, too, the entire civilised world, and must therefore say nothing which all may not hear, but may say much which all need to hear; so the Sermon on the Mount became virtually a proclamation or manifesto, published by the King of the new spiritual Israel upon this first public occasion, but couched in the form of a royal charge to His first subjects and earliest ministers. Its tone and matter answer this idea. It is dogmatic and commanding. Its style is regal. He speaks here, not as a reasoner, nor in strict sense an expounder, nor a prophet, nor a preacher; but as a King. He teaches, indeed; but it is in the brief declarative style of authority, hardly stooping to argue or explain. He exhorts; but it is with the calm and weighty imperative of a



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lawgiver, straightforward as an imperial edict. He predicts; but His closing words fall like the doom of a judge. The discourse suggests, in fact, a certain parallelism to the former legislation from Sinai, when the mediator of the Old Covenant brought stone tables of law from heaven and laid in bloody statutes the constitution of a commonwealth. Yet with what unspeakable grace and tenderness does Jesus temper while He heightens the dignity of the legislator! From long communing with the God of the thunder-voice and robes of cloud, Moses came down to the people, camped about the mountain's foot, and spoke such stern words, guarded with curses, that all the people quaked. Here this other Prophet, with a far kinglier majesty upon His brow, comes from secret prayer upon the hill to speak the higher law of His new kingdom: but He sits meekly in the midst; grace and truth are on His lips; His hands are full of blessings; His words drop balm upon the wounded heart: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit.'

Dent. xviii.  
15.

Matt. v. 3-  
16.

This kindlier tone of the law of the new kingdom lay deep in its relation to the old. He who examines the sermon will find that it presupposes the whole work of the legal economy. It starts with men who are already poor in spirit,

penitent, and hungering after something better. It takes for granted that the law has driven the people out of easy sin and self-righteous hopes; has convinced, pricked, emptied, softened them; so that now they are ready to welcome as a little child a kingdom which is of grace. It is a gospel for publicans and sinners. It brings near 'blessing' at the outset. It comforts, it fills, it forgives, it adopts, it restores to the vision and the heritage of God; it satisfies the mouth with these good things ere ever it speaks one word of law. Only then, when it has taught us to say, 'Our Father Who art in heaven,' does it lead us up the steeps of a virtue loftier than that of Sinai, bidding us be as perfect as this Father of ours in heaven is perfect. It is the mark and honour of Jesus' kingdom, that it reposes on His Saviourhood. Men must be saved before they can be ruled. His first word therefore is, 'Blessed are ye;' His second, 'Be ye perfect.' *Matt. v. 48* Till a man yields to be washed, changed, fed, and blessed, as poor and bad and hungry and friendless, this King of the saved has no word for him. He stands under, not Christ's law, but Moses'. But why need we toil and sigh at a task which God set us only on purpose to show us how hopeless it is? Let us give over, and come

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down and draw near to lie low at His feet and put heart and head underneath the hand of Him Who says, 'Blessed are ye.' Then, as our Father's sons and our King's brothers, shall not we, the blest ones, walk in love and be perfect as the dear children do ?

Since the new covenant kingdom thus begins where the old leaves off, presupposing that as its foundation and rising out of it to fulfil what the old only postulated, it was impossible for Jesus to unfold the statutes of His new kingdom without close and constant reference to the old. Standing as a Jew within that miniature commonwealth by which God had for some fifteen centuries acted out a standing prediction and prefigure of His New Testament church, speaking as a Jew to Jews, it was necessary to exhibit

Matt, v. 17-  
48.

the new in its relation to the old ; especially necessary, environed as He at this moment was with the greatest popular misconceptions on the point. The whole of His controversy with the leaders of His nation, which had just entered on a very alarming stage, turned upon the blunders which they made as to the connection between the old and the new kingdoms. The people shared these blunders. The very Twelve were not free. In so popular yet elaborate an exposi-

tion of His kingdom as this, He could not fail to fall into a running polemic against the current misconceptions of the day. There underruns a reference all through to two leading misconceptions: first, to the blunder that subjects of the old Israelitic realm were to be *ipso facto* subjects of Messiah and heirs of material glory and blessedness, whether they were good or bad; second, to the blunder that the noble code of social morals which God had given was sufficiently kept by a scrupulous adherence to the letter, from whatever base or godless motive, instead of requiring the service of a loving and honest heart. From national Hebrew particularism on the one hand, and from pharisaic casuistry and literalism on the other, our Lord had come to set God's glorious law free. What wonder if He had been already met by the ignorant and interested cry that He was seeking to destroy the law? That charge was the motto of His enemies; they were even now rallying to it these Galileans; and here, with an opportunity to speak, and thousands of the people waiting on His lips, the spiritual King proclaimed as His counter motto, 'I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil'

Very glorious is the idea of a spiritual king.

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- dom, which He then disentangled from Jewish misconception, and held up before all men's eyes! Its subjects are all penitent, lowly, and pure-hearted people throughout the earth, who unfeignedly long for God's salvation. Its blessings are not material or local aggrandizement, but the satisfaction of the spirit's wants through pardon of sin, sonship to God, the purity and comfort of the Holy Ghost, and the final
- v. 17-48. vision of the divine glory. Its laws are the very will of the King Himself, writ on the heart in love and sweetly conforming affections and character. Its righteousness is far above that of Scribe or Pharisee, in spotless truthfulness within and without, and what seems more than human
- vi. 1-18. charity, generosity, and forgiveness. Its service is spiritual, personal, secret; seen only by the Father, it wins no honour upon earth, but heaps together at the last imperishable and celestial
- vi. 24-34. treasures. Its all-absorbing dominion is so absolute, that this King brooks no rival master; so undivided and clear-handed, that He relieves His subject of all anxiety for the body or the morrow.
- vii. 13 ff. But its entrance gate, ready to open indeed, so that who will but knock shall enter, is yet so strait withal, that the proud heart must strive sore for entrance, and may often strive in vain!

So clear and pure a conception of the perfect form which God designs His community of saved human beings to attain, where every age, even to the last, has furnished its elect and faithful ones, had never yet dawned on the widest-sighted of mankind: nothing so catholic, so complete, so perfect! I do not wonder that the world's most thoughtful men have marvelled at so fair a vision, outshining all that the hopes of ages had been yearning after, yet spoken here, in childlike words, by the lips of a poor man, brought up in the narrowest of all national bigotries; and spoken, too, with such simple assurance at a moment when there was not the most distant chance, to human calculation, of its ever being more than a vision. Neither do I wonder that the elementary truths of this sermon should have entered into the thoughts of all civilised peoples, and taken their place even in the common literature of the race as axiomatic truths, sacred now, and current for ever, to believer and unbeliever alike. But what is all this to us as men in need of salvation? Will it warm us to extol a painted fire? Is there salvation in lingering admiringly outside the city walls, and gazing up at its dazzling turrets? Or was it with the depressing foresight how

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much patronizing admiration and barren praise would be expended on this sermon by men who shall never see the kingdom of God, that He was moved to close with darkening face in words like these : *Every one that heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto*

**Matt. vii. 26.** *a foolish man which built his house upon the sand ?*

Take away the living, working Christ from the fore-front of this sermon—leave out Him Who is able to bless us as we are, weak, crushed, and weeping children of guilt and wrath—and you leave me only a mocking picture ! A kingdom of God, forsooth ! when I am a dead slave, deep in the heart of the kingdom of the devil, and you have shown me no Power, no Helper, no one to translate me out of darkness into light, and from the power of Satan unto God ! Nay, but there stands the living Christ on that hill in Galilee ; and heals the people's plagues, and lifts the demon-power from off their bodies. He will not mock me with a phantom kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy !—a dream-built Palace Beautiful, upreared of clouds, for which I, a captive, can only sigh through my dungeon-bars ! He stands that day among the poor, the mourning, the meek, the hungry in spirit, as He stood among the sick and demon-vexed—a living Fount to both of spiritual

blessing. Touch only, and the virtue will flow out! Ah! but where is He now? He thought that morning how the machinations of priest and Herodian would not let Him stay long here. But, against His going, He made this provision of the Twelve Apostles. That the dead Christ is alive again; that the departed Christ is working on by His invisible Spirit; that neither death could quench nor absence impede that saving action of His on sinful souls, by which He peoples the kingdom of God with re-born subjects: this is the testimony of the Apostolate. A few months, and it was Pentecost. Jesus had died; but these Twelve, fore-ordained and elect unto this very thing, were witnesses of His resurrection. Jesus was away; but these Twelve had become seats, organs, and channels to other men of the Spirit they had got from Jesus. Thus they became twelve foundations to the wall of the new Jerusalem, *Rev. xxi. 14.* being guarantees to all time that this King, by the grace of God anointed in Jordan, though slain by plotting Jews, lives, and not lives only, but works, saves, and to this day blesses, all 'the poor in spirit,' so that 'theirs is the kingdom of God.' The testimony of these Twelve to the living, Spirit-sending King, lives on in the kingdom by a true succession.





## **THE FIRST BEATITUDE.**

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.—MATT. V. 3.*

*Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. . . .  
But woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your  
consolation.—LUKE VI. 20, 24.*

## THE FIRST BEATITUDE.

**I**T must strike every careful reader of the FIRST BEATITUDE.  
Beatitudes how thoroughly Christ's conception of blessedness contradicts the popular estimate of happiness. For mankind at large has its own series of beatitudes, which are so far from being like these, that this Preacher on the mountain seems studiously to reverse the world's judgment. He frames His words so as to fly full in the face of public opinion and the consent of men. He says, 'the poor,' 'the mourners,' 'the meek,' 'the hungry;' but everybody else has always said in his heart, 'Blessed are the rich;' 'blessed are they that are happy;' 'blessed are those who can hold their own, and such as do not need to hunger or thirst at all.' Here, in sober truth, and not at all in bitter satire, is a man whom all the world outvotes. This startling contradiction between Christ and the world rests on a radical difference in their way of looking at human life. They do not mean quite the same thing with their beatitudes. It is of con-

FIRST  
BEATITUDE.  
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dition the world is thinking ; Christ of character. When society claps hands to the cry, ‘ *O felix !* ’ ‘ Oh, lucky fellow ! ’ Oh, rare success ! ’ it is the fortunate circumstances of a man’s lot of which society is thinking. It is the blessedness of having a great deal of money, of being always comfortable, of being environed with what may minister to pleasure, and able always to command what one desires ; it is this blessedness of condition which society crowns with its beatitudes, and to which men pay the tribute of envying it. Alas for this blessedness, which is outside the man ; the blessedness of circumstance, and accident, and transient condition ; the blessedness which Time’s scythe mows down like grass to be cast into the oven ! Not condition does Jesus bless, but character. He counts no earthly state enviable, least of all a state of unbroken ease. But the happy man is the good man. What a man is in himself, not where he is, nor how he lives, nor how much he has, but *what a man is*, is the ground of his blessedness. Of these eight marks, all save one are marks of character. Read them over, and there rises before you the image of one large and fair and consistent character, many-sided, indeed, but of one piece. It need hardly be said that

these eight appellations describe, not so many FIRST  
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separate classes of men, but one class only, in  
whom all the eight characteristics meet; so that  
not one of these blessings is to be had without  
the rest, nor one of these graces to be wrenched  
from its place in the sisterhood. But it is  
worth noting, that not only do these sentences  
describe the same character—they describe it in  
the order of its natural development. They are  
not strung together at haphazard. From first to  
last they are linked close to one another in such  
a way, that although all these eight features of  
Christian character are present throughout the  
life of a Christian, yet each of them comes  
successively to full development as Christian life  
advances. The earliest grace holds the latest  
in its bosom, and the latest rests upon the first,  
and each inherits all that go before, and leads  
on all that follow. In this fair order they  
describe a stately progress from blessedness to  
blessedness—from the gracious root of Christian  
life to the full fruitage of perfected righteous-  
ness, which through trial attains to its reward;  
not so much, as one has said, like sundry grape-  
clusters ripening one after another on the vine  
our Father planteth in believing hearts,<sup>1</sup> as like

<sup>1</sup> Origen, quoted by Tholuck, *Bergpredigt*, p. 67.

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the plant of righteousness itself, whose germ unfolds to flower and fruit and crown of loveliness unfading in the paradise of God.

Another thing to be noted of the whole series is, that the ground of blessedness is not made by our Lord to rest in the possession of character itself, but in that promised grace of God of which character is the condition. Some of the qualities here called blessed might seem even to us to be their own reward. We can understand how it should be a blessed thing to be merciful, or pure, or pacific, though no promise were attached to these states of heart at all. With others it is not so. It is not in itself a good thing to be poor, or to mourn, or to hunger; but for us it becomes good, because otherwise we cannot be enriched, or comforted, or filled. Here the blessing is plainly not in the state of heart, but in that appropriate divine gift which meets and answers such a state of heart. In every case, therefore, there is a deeper divine reason for the blessedness, which Christ's eye sees, where man's sees none. The sum of all the blessings which are here dropped along the course of a Christian's life, or rather, that comprehensive blessing which opens out as a man needs it into many forms; which becomes to the mourner

comfort, to the meek inheritance, food to the hungry, and mercy to the merciful; which gives to the pure-hearted the vision of God, and adoption to the peacemakers: this inclusive formula of beatitude is 'the Kingdom of Heaven.' This alone of the promised blessings is twice repeated. FIRST BEATITUDE. — Matt. v. 3, and v. 10. It is the first blessing, and it is the last. At the outset, it is given in germ. The First Beatitude lays the basis of Christian character in a fundamental or conditioning grace, called poverty of spirit. Given but this, which is the Gospel's solitary demand—given but this elementary state of spiritual emptiness—and to it God already gives in substance the whole riches of His Kingdom. For down from heaven, full-handed, has come the King of Righteousness and Peace and Joy, anointed to set up His rule and bring near His riches wherever a soul lies only open in its need. Rom. xiv. 17. Let the heart be but unpreoccupied, not already full, or content, or rich, or absorbed with what it has, or wrapt in a dream of plenty; but lying empty and awake, and aware of poverty, with cravings which refuse to be silenced: to it God gives at once all that He has to give. Not that the soul as yet can know what it is that it hath got. The Kingdom of Heaven is the possession of the poor in spirit by God's



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bestowal, not by the man's realization of it. Yet the economy of God's saving love has already taken up into itself this so poor soul, and charged itself with the soul's ultimate enfranchisement, enrichment, and glorification into the royalty of approved and perfect goodness. Step by step, the blessings of the Kingdom unfold themselves through successive beatitudes. And when, at the last, the accomplished life is met with approval after fiery trial, and wins and wears its crown, its uttermost or heavenliest blessedness is nothing else than the unfolding of that which was given to it in its first hour of spiritual poverty. To be of God's Kingdom is the first—to have God's Kingdom within us is the last; this Beatitude grasps discipleship from commencement to consummation.

We are now, I think, prepared to look more closely into this singular unworldly condition of all Christian blessedness—this base of the Christian character. What is it to be 'poor in spirit'?

**Luke vi. 20.** In St. Luke's report of the Sermon, the qualifying words 'in spirit' are left out, and the beatitude reads simply, 'Blessed are ye poor!'

It is probable, therefore, that our Lord somehow attached His thought to literal poverty in its ordinary sense, and it is natural to start from that point. Himself a poor man, Jesus found at first, and always, readiest access among the poor. Of them especially, as of children, has the kingdom been composed. Gold is a heavy thing to mount up to heaven with. The words about the impossibility of rich men being saved, with which Jesus once startled His hearers, were not idle words, and to one wealthy inquirer He Himself prescribed a voluntary beggaring of himself to enrich the destitute. Not a few disciples have found their interest in literally following the example of One Who for our sakes became poor; and so far as pride or delight in money goes, it is the business of every disciple to sell all that he hath for the Kingdom's sake. An apostate Roman Emperor thought it a clever thing to confiscate the property of his Christian subjects, and excuse himself with the epigram, that they would 'have the blessedness of entering heaven poor men.' But the wisdom was all on their side, who, in becoming Christ's baptized servants, had already, in the love of their hearts, renounced all that they had of earth for the sake of Christ, long before Julian's edict could make

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Cf. Matt.  
xix. 14.

Matt. xix.  
23, 24.

Matt. xix. 21.

2 Cor. viii. 9.

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them penniless. There is a poverty of spirit in respect of worldly goods, which counts nothing that it has its own, but holds its estates for Christ and for the brethren, without any vow of self-confiscation or voluntary poverty. To deal only as God's steward with one's income, is for most of us a harder piece of Christian service than with one stroke of a pen make oneself a beggar for heaven's sake. To read this word of Jesus in its literal sense as it stands in St. Luke, is not to exhaust it. Yet there can be no objection to read it so, to begin with. Surely Christ *does* reverse the world's judgment, and counts him happy, not who has, but who wants. There is, or there may be, a helpfulness to the soul in losing what opulence will give. But if a poor man be nearer winning heaven than a rich one, it can only be because, when stripped of comforts and of pride, the man may awake to a far more tremendous poverty within. The Dives whom society calls fortunate shall fall under the 'woe' of Jesus Christ, if, through the blandishments of fortune, and amid the easy gaiety or the indulgent pride of wealth, he sits content in forgetfulness of God; whereas right blessed, on a wise computation, is that poor man, to whom poverty has been God's discipline for breaking

the world's spell, and discovering the spiritual emptiness beneath. Life, however, has deeper poverties than penury, because it has treasures costlier than gold. Poor is the sick man whose eye is weary with gazing upon splendour, on whose palate delicacies pall, and for whom his treasures cannot purchase one hour of ease from ache or a night of unfevered sleep. Or what shall we say to the poverty of a heart, though it beat beneath the purple, which hath been robbed of its one idol by that pitiless robber Death, and forced to bury its one love out of its sight? Take from a man whatever he lived for, leant on, rejoiced over, be it friend, or fame, or hope, or work; take that, and you have made him poor. Let the poverty enter but deep enough into his spirit, and you have made him a man spiritless and heartless, crushed out of joy, and ready to beg a crumb of comfort at any hand. Shall we call that, then, blessed, such poverty of spirit? Why yes, truly; if it lead a man, as God meant it should do, to discover a parallel, though vastly more serious and alarming, lack of spiritual treasure; a huger need within this loss of all that once was his and is not. There is meant to be a close providential connection betwixt these two—poverty temporal and poverty

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spiritual; and there really is a close analogy. Men have riches for eternity as well as for time, or they think they have. A man's knowledge of God, his pure acts of worship or of virtue, his strength of will, his resistance to temptation, his goodness of heart, his claim on God's favour, his hope of everlasting happiness: these are jewels no moth can eat nor rust corrode. Such jewels every man does more or less believe himself to have. With such secret hoarded wealth, the very thought of which is sweet, doth every man solace himself. Hardly any one is so broken in character or in self-esteem, but he flatters himself he has some merit left to save him from entire ruin—some better past to fall back on, or some prospect of betterness to look forward to. You could not more thoroughly bring down the man's pride and pauperize him than by proving that treasure of his to be a lie. Prove that to him if you can. Prove that his superiority to his neighbour will stand him in no stead before God; that what he calls his religion is a worthless mask; that his good actions are selfish at their root; that the worm fear has eaten the heart out of his worship; that his virtues are tinsel, and his alms hypocrisy, and his prayers prayers by rote; that there is not, in short, a

shred of truth, or worth, or merit, or living love and goodness before God in all the treasures he has laid up for a world to come: prove this if you can, so that the man shall not clutch any longer at a false hope, nor hug riches that cheat, but shall stand confest, stripped, beggared, bankrupt, a ruined soul before a blank eternity—poor, poor, pitifully poor! Nay, brother, prove it first upon yourself! Are you the man?

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Knowing right well from the truth of God as we do, that there is not one of us who hath so much native goodness as will stand God's fire, nay, not a coin which will pass current at heaven's door; yet must not God Himself take each one of us in hand before this sore argument will be made good? It is not the fact of spiritual poverty which is to be proved; that is soon done: it is the spirit of poverty which has to be inwrought. Poor enough already, and demonstrably without worth or claim or hope, the sinner's spirit pranks itself nevertheless in the airs of a just person, and builds itself up blindly in a painted conceit of religious sufficiency, as if it were 'rich and increased with goods, and had need of nothing.' Rev. iii. 17. Who can work on spirits but God the Spirit? At the back, it may be, of earthly loss, when the spirit of a man is a little broken by it, in one's

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indigence, or one's sorrow, or one's feebleness of soul, He comes with strong words of searching and rebuke; He exposes what we have winked hard at, and flashes up the half-honest excuses which contented us; He lets you see what you are, that you are not well off and provided for heaven, but are a sentenced bankrupt, morally penniless and undone; He slides then into your heart a yielding spirit of humiliation and acknowledgment, a spirit broken and contrite, a spirit empty and weak—the spirit of poverty.

This change to poverty of spirit is as painful as the fall from opulence to indigence must always be. To be born poor is less. But you have been waited on, have you not? by one whom you knew in better days,—a gentleman then of independent means, though now long unfortunate, broken, familiar with want and with the slights and spurns which want meets with among men. You recollect how he accosted you; feeling it, you could see, yet swallowing down his shame, for he could not afford to be proud any longer, and his shabbiness would not hide. He came to—beg? well, something like it: and you were as much ashamed as he, and knew, as you hurried him away, how bitter had been his descent to poverty of spirit. In just such a pitiable plight

must we all draw near to sue for alms from God. FIRST  
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The humbling is none the less real to us that our former pride was delusion, and our present poverty is only the realizing of a fact. The sinner beggared in feeling is but come to his true place at last; his feeling now becomes his state. He always was poor; he knows it now. To this knowledge of need, this destitution of true religion or of moral strength; to this bottomless want of whatever a man ought to have before God or for eternity, there will be added, as is most natural, a corresponding brokenness of the old pride. What has such a man to be proud of? What use is there to hide poverty any longer? Oh to be done with dissembling and making-believe! To keep up no more false appearances before our Maker, to have no more delicacy about being indebted to Him, to be confess bare and without resources, to offer no barter-price, to pretend no loan, but honestly and humbly to take the mendicant's place and raise the mendicant's cry, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!'

Thus far, then, we have got, in the rough, some idea of the elementary state of heart which Jesus meets with His first blessing. It is very elementary. The kingdom of God comes down to meet the sinner as low as is at all possible; asks the



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very least; takes us up just where sin and the law left us, stripped and wounded; and at the outset, when a man is at his poorest, it enriches him with its royal riches. Are you only 'poor'? There is no question yet about what some human teachers are ready enough to put foremost, express or vehement mourning for sin. The seed of that, indeed, is in poverty of spirit. But anxious souls often impede their own coming to Christ, by exacting of themselves a certain keenness of feeling, so much heaviness of heart, or so many tears. Be content. Mourning will come soon enough in the order of Jesus. It is not our poverty by itself, but God's grace to us in our poverty, which makes sorrow flow. Jesus asks not for tears before He will bless: He asks only poverty. If you are so poor in grace that you cannot mourn, cannot hope or hunger as you would, can hardly pray, can only stand in dumb, desolate spiritual want before God, then you are poor enough! Poor enough to bring nothing but empty hands to God, and an empty heart; poor enough to take the heavenly kingdom as a gift from the most rich and bountiful Lord of it; poor enough to have a simple accepting faith when He says, 'It is yours!' Wretched you feel yourself—not 'blessed'? No matter. In your

very wretchedness God sees a willingness to be blessed of Him; and into your void He proceeds to pour His fulness. Your empty hand He fills with Christ. In the room of lost hope, lost righteousness, lost confidences, all lost spiritual possessions of which you once were proud, He bestows a free pardon, with the rights and joy of His gratuitous gospel. Heaven comes down in its wealth to enter the vacant, open heart; and 'blessed are ye, for yours is the kingdom of heaven.'

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It is plain that this first word of Jesus, in its gospel simplicity, takes all that for granted which civines commonly speak of as salvation through grace, and justification by faith and not of works. Besides assuming the legal economy to have wrought its finished work in conviction of sin, it holds in solution the primary principles of evangelical doctrine. In dealing with the wants of human souls, however, and especially when He would bring comfort to uneasy sinners, it was the way of our wise and tender Lord to offer His grace, not in dogmatic formularies, but in easiest, lowliest words of human love. Salvation does not seem far off or inaccessible, even to a child, or to the untaught, or one too faint and fearful of spirit to be able to think much, when God stoops

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down to whisper only in the ear, 'It is yours!' Nor is the kingdom of heaven so hard a thing to grasp, if you say it is but a royal alms dropped by the hand of the Eternal King into every empty, open, out-reached hand of a begging sinner. Who would not fling his own poor wealth away to beg such alms of God? Nay, easier yet. For one may even feel as if this still asked too much when it asks that we should take, grasp, and by faith make or call our own, the kingdom of heaven. Even to say 'It is yours' might seem to imply some exertion on our part in order to secure or get the good of the gift; and for this a man may feel he has no might. To enter in and possess a kingdom given may be too much for him. Let me bring, then, to the weak soul's aid an ambiguity in these words of Jesus which may not be quite undesigned. When Jesus said of *Matt. xix. 14.* little children that '*of such* is the kingdom of heaven,' and when He said of men poor in spirit that the kingdom is *theirs*, He used the same expression. It is capable of both senses. Not only in grammar, but in fact, the relation of Christ's kingdom to His disciples may be apprehended from two sides. It consists of them as its subjects or citizens—its population, so to say; or it belongs to them and is theirs as their country,

their city, their birthright and possession. One may say, either, 'It has me, for it includes me within the range of its laws and protection; I am counted in the census of its people, and its King claims me for His own:' or one may say, 'I have it, for I have within my soul as my personal experience the spiritual righteousness, peace, and joy of the Holy Ghost in which it consists; I realize what it implies of divine favour and holy rule.' In this double sense, the kingdom of heaven, like any earthly one, consists of all, even of the little children whom it has just registered in its roll, and for whom, as for its still helpless citizens, it undertakes to care; but the kingdom can only be said to belong to the adult and veteran saint whom Christ receives after trial and conquest to sit with Him upon His throne. In the First Beatitude, Blessed are the poor, because already, in the dawn of spiritual life, the King counts them for His own, and of them is the kingdom: in the Last Beatitude, Blessed are the martyrs who have kept the faith, and been made like unto the King; for now in full fruition the kingdom of heaven is theirs. Let it not therefore grieve any one if in the poverty of his spirit he cannot as yet claim his inheritance. You are not strong in faith, or trained through

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Matt. v. 10.

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trial, or crowned with joy ; you neither know nor can seize what is prepared for you ; and yet you can consent to be embraced within God's economy of saving grace, as a state receives its new-born subjects. Only yield yourself up, being so poor, into the hands of the most rich King Who is spoil-laden, gift-laden, for you ; and on such as you are, in consideration of your sheer and simple need, uncloaked and confest, does this strange King bestow His kingdom's wealth. Let the grace of God put its strong arms of benediction thus about you : lean on its bountiful bosom ; open your mouth that you may be filled ; and feel thankful for any earthly poverty of estate, or of health, or of heart, any wasting of your family treasures and scattering of your pearls, any moth that will eat or rust which corrodes what you lay up here against days to come, if only thereby, and not otherwise, can you escape the 'woe' of those 'that are rich, for they have received their consolation.' Blessed is anything under heaven, how grievous soever, which helps us to discover our beggary in the true riches, till with poor spirits we are fain to take the Lord Jesus and His kingdom of heaven as a free gift of God's royal and gracious bounty !

## **THE SECOND BEATITUDE.**

*Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.—*  
**MATT. V. 4.**

*Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh. . . .*  
*Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.*  
**—LUKE VI. 21, 25.**

## THE SECOND BEATITUDE.

**W**HEN the Lord Jesus, as the Man of SECOND BEATITUDE.  
Sorrows, Whose thoughts are at a divine distance from our thoughts, lays thus His hand on Isa. liii. 3, lv. 9.  
every mourner and calls him 'blessed,' He seems to utter the widest of all His beatitudes. Who is he that has not mourned? If the earth is full of anything, it is of sorrow. Could we bring at once to view all forms of grief, as Milton's Michael showed to Adam that dismal 'crew' of maladies which wait on death; could we unroof the city at any hour by night or day; could we read back in one another's bosoms the history of our own past lives: should we not find that the field of human sorrow is as large as the life of man upon the earth? It is not only such plain calamities as here and there desolate the earth with war or wreck or famine; not only the sickness and death which no family home escapes; not only the loss of property, the feuds which sunder friendly hearts, solitude and poverty,



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Job v. 7.

Burns.

slander, contumely, and wrong: for, besides all acute and singly notable griefs, there is a broad, deep underlayer of trouble, a chronic mournfulness, which is due not to the magnitude, but to the multitude, of its petty and secret causes. Men not unusually melancholy, nor even contemplative, confess to the ceaseless gnawing at their heart of a host of mean enemies which, insect-like, infest their life, in spite of ease and plenty; confess that out of small irritations, ignoble cares, *ennui*, thwartings, disappointments, wants, and discontents, is bred a daily sum of unhappiness in happiest days, over which the unsatisfied heart inwardly mourns. It is the voice of sober and universal experience, not any morbid or partial plaint, which testifies, in words sacred and secular, that 'man is born unto trouble,' and 'made to mourn.' If this be, as He strangely says it is, a 'blessed' thing, there are enough to share the blessedness.

Let not the mourner of the earth think that the Lord Jesus mocks him by this word of congratulation where he looked for condolence; nor let him straightway thrust the gracious greeting from him, as if, though it sounds so large, it really meant only some select class of mourners, some few whose mourning is not of the usual

sort common to man, but very rare and religious indeed. Rather let every mourner lend his ear. SECOND  
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This message is to be carried in to every inner room of inconsolable affliction, and to be whispered to every bowed and un comforted heart: 'Behold, John xi. 28.  
the Comforter is come, and calleth for thee.' While I do not say that this will by any means exhaust the Beatitude, or is even its core and true secret sense; while I know that, by His promise of comfort, Jesus would lead us into a far more real and alone essentially blessed mourning, lying back of all earthly and fleshly; yet the truth of His words begins even here. In all mourning, be it for the dead or for the living, or for what worldly loss or calamity it may, there is hid, as it were, a beginning and seed of blessedness. It has come for blessed ends; it will grow, if we use it well, to blessed fruit. Satan comes, says St. Paul, as an angel of light. So sorrow, 2 Cor. xi.  
14.  
methinks, though it walks the earth veiled and draped in black, with dust upon its bent head and steps that fail, will yet be found to wrap within its weeds the light and blessedness of heaven; and he who should entertain this guest aright, will find, when the disguise is laid aside, that he has 'entertained an angel unawares.' As a mes- Heb. xiii. 2  
senger of God's grace, this angel of sorrow knocks

SECOND BEATITUDE. at our door, charged to lead us, if we will, to that  
 2 Cor. vii. 'godly sorrow' which 'worketh repentance.' If,  
 10. instead of putting it from us as an unwelcome visitor, we will sit meekly at its feet to hear its voice, it will fetch forth from its dark bosom the very consolations of God.

It is not hard to see how this should be so. In the first place, all real mourning makes the heart softer and the spirit humbler. When 'Jeshu-  
 Deut. xxxii. 15. run waxed fat,' he 'kicked.' It is the natural result of an easy, unchastened life to grow self-indulgent. When the heart is lifted up, restraints are thrown off; divine fear is cast behind the back, and conscience becomes either crusted with insensibility or drugged by self-esteem. But let the hand of God crush the reed which rose so straight; let the wind puff out the lamp  
 Isa. xlii. 3 which blazed so high: the 'bruised reed' now,  
 with  
 Matt. xii. 20. and 'smoking flax,' perchance will suffer the same Breath to rekindle it and the same Hand to bind it up. The bereavement by which the soul was stripped of its old comforts left it 'poor in spirit,' through the loss of what it held to be its wealth. Still more, this 'mourning,' which is not exactly affliction itself, but rather that broken and weakened inward state in which affliction leaves us when it has done its work,—

still more does this predispose the soul to return like a prodigal to the Father's house. When the sinner, who was stout and brave in sin, lies in deep distress, with his strength gone and his hopes dead, spiritless and faint, thankful for any help or comfort—ah, what humbling of the insolence of his rebellion, what an end to vaunting and security? Will not this soften the hardest, prick the dullest, and make the worst better? May not one draw near now to even the most unapproachable of wicked men, and find him open to hearken at last to the voice of God?

In the next place, there is a voice in 'mourning' from the Almighty. It preaches sin. It calls to repentance. Even to an onlooker, the disasters of providence, when they fall on families or nations, are so many rough-clad preachers in the desert, whose voice now and then grows loud enough to be heard across a continent, drowning the roar of traffic in the exchange and the flutter of gaiety in the saloon. The voice of the Righteous One, when it speaks in calamities of special magnitude, is one which all the earth may well be still to hear. To the sufferers themselves it bears a singularly direct and express message of rebuke and warning. Each blow which makes a man mourn has an inward connection with the sin in

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- SECOND BEATITUDE. — him, and that connection God means that he should feel. It is a stroke struck at sin. It is the 'faithful wound of a Friend,' Who does not love us less, but hates our evil more; Who loves us indeed too well to suffer evil in us, and for the love He bears is too faithful to flatter or to cloak the sin we harbour. 'The day of adversity' puts men on 'considering;' and there is such a strict and natural tie betwixt the two, that the thought of sin treads always at the heels of suffering. Suffering is sin 'finding you out.' Suffering comes, like Elijah to the Zidonian widow, to 'call your sin to remembrance, and to slay your son.' Then, when you sit alone in the dust and darkness of your mourning, beside your sealed-up fountains or dry cisterns of earthly consolation, you are made to feel how far sin has driven you a-field from God, the original and everlasting Spring of all joy. What lies so near to a mourner's heart as the bitterness of having thus departed from the living God, unless it be the sore need which the soul has of that absent and, it may be, angry One's return, to be Himself the upbinder of His own wounds? To this spiritual issue all 'mourning' tends. For this divine comfort it always seems to call. It is touching to find what impatience real mourners
- Prov. xxvii. 6.
- Eccles. vii. 14.
- Num. xxxii. 23.
- 1 Kings xvii. 18; cf. Gen. xlii. 21.
- Cf. Jer. xvii. 5-8.
- Job v. 18.

have of every false comforter. You try to heal their wounds with the usual salves of society. SECOND  
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You tell them it is a common lot; and grief is vain; and it were better to bear up with a will, steeling the soul to hardness and coldness: for grief, you say, is profitless or hurtful. You bid them seek for change of scene, and look out for solace on fair nature's face; or you send them into cheerful company, and trust to time, the healer, to soothe the smart. Have you comforted your brother? Can you do more by such poor bandages than stanch the bleeding of the heart? Can you really cure the sore, and give back rest and joy? It is not every sort of comforting a mourner will call 'blessed.' If you cannot let me in through this gateway of distress to a peace, a largeness of delight, unfelt before; if you do not turn my very tears to showers of sunshine, and lift me from my valley up to heights of glorious bliss on which I could not otherwise have stood: where, I pray you, is the 'blessedness' of my 'mourning'? And you never can do this by choking sobs with pride, or diverting thoughts with change, or forgetting old memories in fresh concerns. No mourner who is true to himself will have such comfort. God never meant he should. God would have

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men mourn on, and mourn deeper, till their heart has pierced through to the real root of all affliction, in its own separation from Himself; and then He would have them mourn for that till He has brought them to Himself to be comforted in Him. He has put this blessedness into all mourning, that He means it to lead to mourning for sin; and He means all mourning for sin to lead to repentance, and all repentance to the blessed comfort of pardon and purifying. It is sad to mourn; but it is tenfold sad to mourn in vain. The thoughtful Christian who contemplates human life sees no more grievous sight than wasted grief. How many people God smites with unsparing love, time after time, till 'the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint;' but it works no contrition! Passion it works in plenty; rebellion, recrimination, the tearing of the soul in madness of despair, dark gloom and blasphemy, searedness at last and death, it works; but contrition, never. It bears no comfort. Only when by the sore and softened heart sin is remembered, and a long-forgotten God; and the soul, taking to herself the shame of her rebuke, comes not only to feel 'poor in spirit,' because undone, but also to bewail the sin which has undone her, and to weep for her unpurged ini-

2 Cor. vii. 10.

Isa. i. 5.

quities ; then only is fulfilled in power the promise and the beatitude of Christ : 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.' 'O God,' some one prays, 'teach us how to grieve !'

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Having tried to trace the general sense of this Beatitude from its obvious reference to all mourning up to that special mourning over sin which alone is sure of comfort, let us inquire a little into this 'godly sorrow' as a blessed feature in Christian character.

When a sinner has become, in the words of the First Blessing, 'poor in spirit,' he has not exhausted by a great deal the feelings proper to an adequate view of his whole condition before God. He has, in truth, taken in but one side of his condition, and that its lower and earthward side. He is no longer rich toward God ; well-to-do and full of hopes and merits and fair chances of getting creditably through this life into a better. He is bankrupt in character, and as broken in spirit as in fortune ; reduced to beg for divine grace as an alms to keep him from dying. In all this, it is his own state which occupies him. Sin is his debt, and its consequences his loss. His case has the urgency of one about to perish, the pressing extremity of whose position absorbs attention, and



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Acts xvi. 30.

makes it an impertinence to waste time in idle regrets, so long as the passionate cry after salvation has not been answered. Let it be answered. Let there mingle with this keen sense of want and undoneness the beginnings of trust in the salvation of God ; some vague hope, at least, that He Who can save, and has saved some, and says He will save any, may after all not cast out *me*. In proportion as this light of hope dawns, the soul is able to entertain another view of its own state. Want is pinching, but guilt is a profounder sorrow. To be about to perish in one's moral poverty cries out for instant help ; but, perish or not, to be in His pure sight foul, and in one's own most shameful, plunges a man into a grief from which he does not get such swift deliverance. It is not grief for sin, it is poverty of spirit, which makes a man a subject of the kingdom of Christ ; but out of that consciousness of perdition there grows up, under grace, a whole world of penitential regrets and tender heavy sighings by reason of iniquity. Set free in any measure from the pressure of sin upon himself as ruinous to his own prospects, a man can the better enter into its intrinsic evil as against God, its wrongness and the stain it leaves, its full burden of shameful and sorrowful

heinousness in the sight of the Jealous and Holy One.

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There is progress here. It is an advance, when the prodigal, after he has come to know his own poverty, remembers how he has sinned against his Father. Better to weep for shame than for fear; to weep, not for one's own loss, but for the wrong we have done Another. This is the second stage of experience; the deeper, nobler mourning which survives the anguish of the first anxiety, and settles into an abiding frame of spiritual life. Such mourning for guilt may be extremely poignant, lacerating the soul as with lashings of remorse; or it may be silently bitter, the hidden misery of self-contempt; or it may be long and heavy, a burden of regretful memories not to be shaken off. It never is a thing to be ashamed of; and when it is at its purest, and leads the sinful man, all melted and bowed into childlikeness, to weep out silent confessions of old sins in the ear of God, it is a sight to make angels glad. Luke xv. 17, 18.

Right noble, manly, and Christian are these tears. Exquisitely pure are the first drops of genuine compunction shed all alone into the pitying bosom of his Father by the returned wanderer. God puts them in His vial. 'Blessed is that mourner, for he shall be comforted.' Ps. lvi. 8. How sweet

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to the disgraced child, when, confession and chastisement being over, the lingering tear is kissed from the hot red cheek by lips that are reconciled, and mother's eyes, swimming over with pity and with pardon, look love again in eyes that dare now look up! So sweet shall be his comfort, 'as one whom his mother comforteth.' It is pure and rare—it is delicious beyond words, this thrill of forgiveness bliss, when a sense of restored favour from Himself rushes into the broken heart at the mercy-seat; and one who was abashed in the very dust of shame and grief is ravished by His most excellent love and a persuasion of His most complete redemption, into the heavens of wonder, joy, and praise!

That hour of repentance does not stand alone. To a spiritual man there is pain in the mere presence of sin. It does not need that chastisement should call him to deeper mourning, or that special outbreaks of transgression should humble him anew. A Christian man carries within him what may make all his days a time of heaviness. I do not forget, when I say this, that saints are bound to be 'always rejoicing;' nor do I mean that their inward fast is to be expressed in a melancholy visage or any squalid traces before men; but it consists with Christian experience

2 Cor. vi. 10;  
cf. Phil. iv. 4.

Matt. vi. 16.

that there may be beneath the sunniest Christian cheerfulness a deep and secret mourning over the sin which is in us all and the sin which abounds around us. This makes the Christian's heart always sober, if not often sombre, and is meant to send him for fresh comfort nearer to the heart of God. Sin within us and without is a fact too central, too omnipresent, and too depressing, ever to let the Christian escape from beneath its shadow. He is a man who has learnt neither to forget nor to despise the dark side of life; for he has opened himself with Christ to the curse and bent with Christ to the cross. Yet in this 'mourning' too he is blessed. Such an honest facing of his own and the world's suffering in its real meaning as the fruit of sin, is a better thing than the world's anxious efforts to strew with sand every blood-mark in this amphitheatre of life, and drown with *vivas* the groans of those that are dying. To do this brings a man into fellowship with the sorrowing Christ, and thus within the region of Christ's own comforts. It sends him away from polluted streams of what men call 'pleasure,' to drink for his solace fresh waters that fail not. His joy, to be sure, is as yet no more than comfort. It is when one is, like Hagar, in the wilderness that a well is opened by

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Gen. xxi.  
14 ff.

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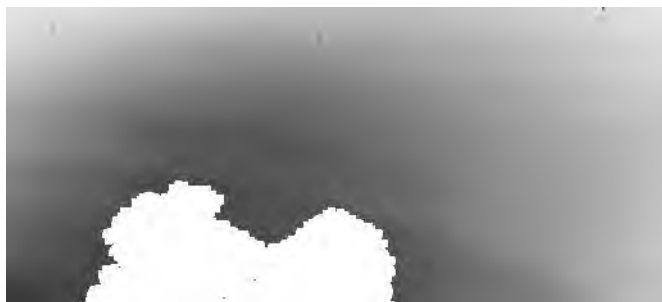
one's side and a voice speaks from heaven. The inhospitableness of this world is only relieved in a measure by such consolations as are meantime given to the wayfarer. Yet it is comfort indeed. For, in plain truth, this mourning sends the Christian heart simply unto God; and He being sought for His own sake, and rested in as the soul's ultimate portion, fills her mouth with satisfaction, and turns her mourning into gladness. It is comfort, too, which will grow at last to perfect bliss. The sources of mourning will be dried up when sin is for ever dead; and the source of comfort will be reached when God is at last enjoyed. To whatever extent the Christian mourner may here and now receive the promise or realize the beatitude of the Lord Jesus, there comes at last a day when all men, and they also who in this world are comforted but then tormented, shall confess that the blessing is with those who have mourned here and wept, for in that day 'they shall be comforted' indeed.

Ps. lxiii. 3-5.

Luke xvi. 25.

## THE THIRD BEATITUDE.

*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.—*  
MATT. v. 5.  
Cf. PS. xxxvii. 11: *But the meek shall inherit the earth.*



## THE THIRD BEATITUDE.

**T**HIS Beatitude springs immediately out of the two foregoing, and completes the first THIRD BEATITUDE. cycle or introductory group of Christian graces. For it will be seen on reflection that the first three in this chain of Beatitudes are to be clustered in one group, in virtue of their having a common character. They form the trilogy of gospel humiliation—the descending steps, low, lower, lowest, by which the soul is ‘converted,’ Matt. xviii. 3; cf. Ps. cxxxi. 2. and ‘becomes as a little child,’ ‘weaned of his mother.’ In the order of Christ’s blessings, because in the sequence natural to Christian life, this group of negative and passive and downward-going graces precedes the next, in which the strength of desire that presses upward in its hunger is filled with the righteousness of God—See Matt. v. 6-9. with mercy, purity, and beneficence. On the ground laid in the first three, the levelled and deep-sunk foundation of a thoroughly subdued spiritual nature, there is hereafter to be built up



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Matt. xxiii.

12; cf. xviii.

4, xx. 26, 27.

Mark ix. 35;

cf. x. 43 44.

into moral stateliness, the righteous character depicted in the next four. But let us not be over-hasty. The first constitutional principle in the kingdom of grace must have full scope meantime; that 'he that shall humble himself shall be exalted,' that 'if any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all.' It is Christ's purpose, that, before He has done with blessing him, this chosen sinful man shall be filled with divine righteousness, and elevated to the vision of God in His pureness, and even manifested among the sons of God, who, because they are like the Son in His victorious, peacemaking love, are for ever associated in His filial glory. All this is destined and to come. First, however, the sinner must be stripped of fancied wealth and reduced in spiritual beggary to ask from God His alms-gift of eternal life; he must be stricken through with arrows of godly grief, bewailing all the past at Jesus' feet, and not able to forgive himself, even though Christ with sweetest words comforts his conscience with forgiveness; nay, from this sore crushing in the press he has to come forth with spirit broken and bent and contrite, to walk thenceforth softly, and take life's buffets meekly, and bear his Master's cross behind Him, till he reach the better country and the inheritance of promise.

Thrice blessed are those 'little ones' of God, who have been led from 'poverty' to 'mourning' over sin, and from 'mourning' to 'meekness;' for in this piecemeal loosening within them of the heart of stone, they have the condition of all later advances unto perfection. They are herein regenerate, infant sons as it were; His unmanifested children, who do with patience 'wait' and shall therefore with certainty 'inherit.'

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Ps. xxxvii. 9.

In our endeavour to understand more exactly this quality of meekness, it will therefore be suitable to start from the two beatitudes already considered. When God brings a man to see that he is without resource, and must be lost in his own evil unless he will cry for help, it is commonly a considerable surprise and discomfiture to the man. The step down from an average state of content with oneself to abject poverty of spirit is a deep step and is taken with a shock. The pride of independence is broken for good. But whom God first breaks, He afterwards melts. The knowledge of need is followed by the feeling of guilt. Sorrow softens. There is no solvent for the rocky nature of a man like hot, honest tears of penitence. The hardest thoughts of God give way, the stiffest will yields, the most intractable temper turns ductile; the soul breaks

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down, grows ashamed, confesses everything, and becomes soft and tender as a babe, when the fountains of godly sorrow are fairly broken up. To be convicted without excuse, and beg without a claim, may crush a man's pride and shut his mouth; but once he can be brought to repent and confess with tears at the feet of the Person he has wronged, we may be sure his humility is complete. When this repentance amounts to the recognition of a man's total sinfulness, both of nature and of life, before Him Whose relation to us, being supreme and central, embraces all experience, there is a fire kindled at the very base of the soul capable of dissolving the whole. That same sense of the deserved anger of God by reason of personal baseness, which, coming from without and set like lighted faggots round about the impenitent, burns a 'vessel of wrath' into hardness; when taken into the soul's interior by gracious repentance, liquefies what sin had petrified, and renders up the spirit to its Father's hands in humble willingness to suffer the Father's pleasure.

Rom. ix. 22;  
cf. ver. 18.

Now the state which results from this twofold process of breaking and of softening—the attitude to God in which the 'hammer' and the 'fire' leave a man—is meekness. For I think this

Jer. xxiii. 29.

'meekness' is first of all a state towards God, not man. It is that tameness of spirit which ensues on the death of self-righteousness or self-assertion before our Heavenly Father. Hence one of old called 'humility, the mother of meekness;' and one of the moderns has said, 'It grows out of the ashes of self-love and on the grave of pride.' Rooting itself deep in these antecedent beatitudes, in undesert, the sense of which is soul-poverty, and ill-desert, which worketh soul-sorrow, it holds itself ready to fall in with anything, the least or the worst, which God may give. If one's relation to God is simply that of a poor and mourning sinner, enriched it may be, indeed, and comforted by His kindness, yet poor and mourning still; then clearly, all presumptuous expectation, and pride which frets at denial, and self-will which stickles for its likings and grumbles to be crossed, are things as unreasonable as they are impious. Not only has the insolence which sits easily on prosperous sinners collapsed; not only is there a bridle put on passion, impudence, and petulance; for, of course, the position of a pardoned penitent makes such 'superfluities of naughtiness' insufferable; there is even a ready stooping of the neck to wear God's yoke and of the shoulder to take up God's burden, which is only

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Gregory of  
Nyssa.

Rambach,  
quoted by  
Stier.

Jas. i. 21.

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Matt. xi. 29.

possible to one who has 'learnt of' Him who is 'meek and lowly in heart.' This meekness toward God is the very secret at once of yoke-wearing and of burden-bearing; of such obedience as finds God's service 'easy,' because the soul is trained to lend herself willingly to her gracious Master's work; and of such endurance as makes trial 'light,' because she presumes not to raise one rebel wish against His hand, nor deems God's sorest load one half so heavy as her own guilt. Wherever there is in God's sight this costly 'ornament of a meek and quiet spirit,' worn by man or woman, there will be found a noiseless submission to divine arrangements, the gentlest possible acquiescence in providence, with every love to be still and dumb and as a child before Him, knowing that He is God.

1 Pet. iii. 4.

This blessed frame of spirit toward God has its consequent and counterpart in the meek man's social temper. Let the reader recall, if he can, any hour in his past religious experience in which he seemed to come nearest to what I have been describing; in which, after strokes of God and agonies of repentance, he came to have no longer any will of his own, but lay, worn out and soft and yielding, within the mighty hand of the Father, content to lie there and let Him have

His way. In that gracious hour, did there not seem to be outbreathed from the deep meekness THIRD BEATITUDE. which possessed your spirit a gentle breath over all the life? a heavenlier temper, which yielded more readily to the frowardness of the froward, and 'took' more 'joyfully the spoiling of your goods,' Heb. x. 34. which was less ruffled by daily care, and could look down with serener eyes than at other times on the struggling interests which engage in vain hot haste the hearts of men and crowd with passion or with folly this stage of time? Evanescent, perchance, that remembered season, like an angel's visit! How if it were perpetual? How if a more inwrought 'poverty' and 'mourning' for sin should beget it as a stated habit of the soul? Would not this lowly brokenness of will, if it were a constant thing, form by degrees an abiding impress on the character, temper, and demeanour of a Christian; and declare itself to all in his surpassing humility, and in a certain rare long-suffering gentleness, which looks like good temper of a diviner sort than common, or as the very perfection of sweet courtesy?

Observation tells us that it is thus men do in fact grow meek. This is a Christian grace before it is a virtue of the schools. There is first a religious meekness born of the soul's penitential

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So Bengel  
in loc.

So Calvin  
in loc.

1 Thes. iv. 6.

exercises in secret before God; and what the world sees and wonders at under the name of 'meekness,' is only a reflection to the outer character from this deeper experience. All genuine meekness among men,—all, I mean, which is more than mere easiness of disposition,—may be defined to be that bearing of a man towards the things of time and of this world, which springs from having the heart broken by religious penitence, and the will put humbly into the hand of God. Do we call him 'meek' who gives way in silence before noisy pretension, will rather give up his due than wrangle for it, and is so far from pushing himself into foremost places, that he yields before the force or 'importunity of earthly-minded' men, nor murmurs at the 'usurpation of the unjust'? Is it not because his natural self-importance has been humbled into 'poverty of spirit,' that he is prepared thus to accept the lowest place? Or is it 'meekness,' as some older expositors defined it, to be 'undesirous of revenge' (*non cupidus vindictæ*)—'not easily provoked,' slow to take offence, and, though stung deep, betraying no personal bitterness, but hiding oneself beneath the wing of God, Who is the promised 'avenger of all such'? Surely he forbears and forgives best who knows by the depth of his contrition for

personal guilt how deeply he has been forgiven. Or shall we say he is the 'meek' man, who, resting in the quiet and peaceable enjoyment of so much as God has been pleased to give, can meet each turn of fortune's wheel with an equal mind, quarrelling neither with injurious providence nor with more successful rivals; in prosperity unassuming, undesponding in adversity? Show me a will made pliable to the Heavenly Father under the experience of grace and forgiven sin, and I will show you equanimity above the philosophers—the equanimity of the Christian child! Yes, we must be converted to become meek. Only through sore self-emptying and bitter draughts of sin-sorrow shall we reach the Third Beatitude. It is true that it will be easier for some dispositions than for others. Your good-natured people, who by constitution take the world as it comes, will display, to begin with, a bastard species of meekness, a wild slip on which perhaps may be the sooner grafted the new grace. It will be different with ardent and imperious natures,' with men impatient of injustice, or with such as are aspiring and strong. To tame the leopard into lying down with the kid, will ask a longer and sterner education. The old nature will for long be breaking out at times

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So Luther.

Isa. xi. 6.



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through superimposed lessons of gentleness. Still, the new meek heart must be found in every converted character, in fuller or in slighter development; for meekness is the seed of childlikeness. It is the mark of the 'little one' who has a Father, and, being weak and small, leaves all things to that Father's care. Others may fight for place, or toil for handfuls of the earth, to win and to hoard; but he has been begotten from above, and, without either fight or toil—thrust aside, trodden down, and spoiled as he may be for the present—the heritage of his sonship is sure. Like the meek Christ, the Son Whom men despised, he can afford to walk meekly upon the earth; for, in the Father's time, he shall inherit it.

This leads us to turn back that we may now approach the text from its other side, the side of the promise. As the spiritual quality pronounced to be blessed needed to be linked carefully to the foregoing verses, so the blessing attached to it must be read in the light of its ancient and interesting biblical pedigree.

This promise has a history in Scripture. It dates back as far as the call of Abraham. Its form then was a promise to inherit, not 'the earth,' but 'the land;' though one term is used for both

with such studied duality of reference as to baffle translation. The covenant which God made with Abraham contained a promise that in some future age his seed should inherit 'the land' stretching from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates, across which he gazed from its hill-tops and wandered with his encampment, a tolerated foreigner. This promise, made repeatedly to himself, and renewed successively to his son and grandson, was of course fulfilled in this form, when before the unwarlike pastoral tribes of Israel, seven mightier peoples, with their fortified cities and iron chariots, fell an easy and rapid prey. 'They got not the land in possession by their own sword; . . . but Thy right hand and Thine arm, and the light of Thy countenance, because Thou hadst a favour unto them.' But just as 'seed of Abraham' was an ambiguous expression, enclosing within its obvious national reference, as in a shell, a hidden kernel of spiritual significance, one day to burst and outgrow the national; as the covenant with the lineal descendants of this man wrapt up an inner covenant with all his spiritual children, who in Christ Jesus share like precious faith: so the promise of 'the land' foreshadowed and enwrapt the much more magnificent promise of 'the earth.' 'Unto thy spiritual seed Christ, and those who

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Gen. xii. 7,  
xiii. 14, xv.  
18, xvii. 8.

Gen. xxvi. 3,  
xxviii. 13.

Deut. vii. 1,  
ix. 1; Josh.  
xvii. 16.

Ps. xliv. 3;  
cf. Josh.  
xxiv. 12.

Gal. iii. 16-  
29; Rom. iv.  
and ix.

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are in Him, will I give the earth for an inheritance ;' so faith, instructed, reads betwixt the lines. The unfolding of this inner promise may be traced already in those more spiritual Old Testament books, which serve in so many ways as conductors from the Old to the New. It is found indicated in several Psalms, in Proverbs, and in the later part of Isaiah ; above all, it presides over the remarkable Psalm from which Jesus here quotes. This quotation settled it. That God is prepared at least to give to Christ's gospel Church an inheritance which shall 'excel the inheritance of the tribes as far as the bounds of earth exceed their strip by the Levant ; and that this, and not any terrestrial occupancy of allotted lands, has been the hope of the godly in every age : these things are plain from our present text, and were plainly received by St. Paul and the Writer to the Hebrews. That this 'inheritance' which 'excels in beauty,' the inheritance of the meek Son to be co-inherited by His meek brethren, is to be, not in a figure but in literal fact, *the earth* regenerated and made new, redeemed from corruption and reconstructed in glory ; this is the last light which Revelation suffered to fall upon the ancient Abrahamic promise ere its curtain fell in Patmos. 'There remaineth indeed a' land 'for the people of God ;'

Ps. xxv. 13.  
Ps. i. 5.  
Prov. ii. 21.  
Isa. lx. 21.  
Ps. xxxvii.

Rom. iv. 13.  
Heb. iv. 8,  
xi. 10-16.

Ps. xvi. 6  
in Rous'  
Version.

2 Pet. iii. 13.  
Rev. v. 10.

but that 'land' is none other than 'the world' (as St. Paul has it: Abraham is 'the heir of the world'), this very rich and manifold earth over which the usurper meanwhile rules, and wherein therefore the heirs are meanwhile but tolerated foreigners—'strangers and pilgrims,' from sire to son.

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Rom. iv. 13.

May we not now understand our Beatitude?

This great earthly 'land' we live in; this kingdom of 'the world'; this sum-total of material blessings, of fame and human love, of art and riches, of ease, success, and pleasure; this universe of all desirables which are not native to the 'heavenly places': this is the good thing our Master gives away in the text. Mark to whom it goes! There are those who seek it. Men in whose heart God has 'set the world,' Eccles. iii. 11. choose no better portion, and think to take their fill of this. It seems, in fact, given up to them. It is, one would say, flung abroad amongst them, that he who can may get the most of it. Generation after generation casts its tide of young strong life into this old world-scramble—casts it in untired, unwarned, as if the thing were new. There are prizes for the successful: a worldful of prizes, so one could but get at them, more than any two arms can grasp or single heart hold, of what you

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will—of rank or wine or gold; books, dice, wreaths, titles, lands; thrones and ermines; friends and fortunes. Get what you can of them. Get them as best you can. Toil for them; fight for them; cheat for them; if you have wit, plot deep; if you are strong, strike hard; be diligent, be patient; watch for success as men watch for dawn, and dig for it as they dig for hid silver; compass sea and land in search, spend life in labour: Is not this world at least our own? given to us? real and present? Who would drop this earth we know, for that shadow heaven we hear of?

Meanwhile there are others who seek it not. A few, who feel how poor is all this idolatry of earth and who mourn for the sin of it. They have turned aside from the strife with bleeding hearts. They are become like little children, who have learned of Christ to call God their 'Father.' Being lowly-hearted, they do not greatly grieve though you overlook them, or outrun them, or climb over them to mount a higher rung on life's ladder. Having another treasure in heaven, they set small store by the earth's good things, and would not break their hearts though you snatched them all away. They have learnt 'in whatsoever state they are, therewith to

Job iii. 21.

Matt. vi. 20.

Phil. iv. 11,  
i. 20.

be content ;' having in truth but one very great desire, 'that Christ may be magnified in their bodies, whether it be by life or by death.' Therefore they are patient enough of the world's scoff and buffet, and walk quietly along their pilgrim way to another 'land that is very far off,' where, if they can but 'see the King in His beauty' and hear a word of welcome from His lips, they will deem themselves overpaid for the loss of all things. They have sold this world to gain the next ; lost earth to find heaven.

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ISA. xxxiii.  
17.

Have they then lost earth ? Must one beatitude at least go past the children and light upon the godless ? Is the possession of God Himself to be had only by the final forfeit of this fair, good earth of God ? It were a happy forfeiture if it were so ; but our Father is too frugal in His generosity not to grudge even this world to the worldly. From them He wrests even this their own chosen beatitude, and gathers up at last this crumb also for children's bread, that not even earth's old loveliness and material worth and the primal blessing which it wore, may be lost or wasted. He will not let the saints lose what the saints count loss for Him. He deems earth worth putting in His covenant, that having withdrawn it from fingers unclean and purified it by

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fire, He may make it after all His children's heritage and home, a beauty and a joy for ever.

In the thirty-seventh Psalm, from whose eleventh verse our Lord quoted this Beatitude, the ideal future state is represented in theocratic dress, under terms borrowed from the covenant of Canaan, as a land in the everlasting possession of Abraham's true seed, who, being righteous and meek, keep in the Lord's ways and wait on Him for help and blessing. While the times were evil, and evil-doers flourished in fraud and violence,

- Ver. 2, 35. like green grass in spring or a spreading tree, the upright man practised meekness. He did  
Ver. 1, 8. neither fret nor envy nor rage, but 'rested' in  
Ver. 7, 5. God. He 'waited patiently,' and 'committed his way unto the Lord.' But he has seen the day-light of judgment break; he has heard the mocking of the Supreme Avenger; he has stood still  
Ver. 6. when the wicked were 'cut down' like herbs,  
Ver. 13. and, like 'fat' in the flame of sacrifice, were  
Ver. 2. 'consumed' by the fury of the Lord. Now,  
Ver. 20. therefore, he dwells in the purged land alone.  
Ver. 9. He inherits the emptied earth in unchallenged proprietorship and perpetual tenure. He 'delights  
Ver. 11. in the abundance of peace,' and his 'inheritance  
Ver. 18. shall be for ever.'

Thus sharply does this Psalm bring out the

contrasted relations to the good things of earthly life sustained by the worldly and the godly spirit, the grasping and the meek. Thus clearly does it assert the great principle, which more or less is to be tracked through human experience, but which is adopted as fundamental only in the kingdom of Christ, that the earth does not go in the long run by competition, but by inheritance; that it is not strength which disposes of everything, but the grace of God; that victory is to the meek; that he who humbles himself shall be exalted. There does run through human history some hint of such a truth as this. To wait on God in patient endurance of evil is in the end the world-inheriting, and therefore world-possessing, principle. It is plain, if we have faith in God, that it must be so. The way to make the best of this world must be to 'seek first the kingdom of God.' But we only understand how comprehensive and profound the principle is, when by the aid of these scriptures we forecast its splendid outcome in the ultimate destinies of Christ's kingdom. In the history of Christ Himself, we do for the first time see the meek literally 'inheriting the earth.' Maker and Owner of it all, Jesus walked His own earth in poverty, and died on it in shame, a matchless model of meek-

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Matt. vi. 33.



THIRD BEATITUDE. ness. He did not 'fret' though men and Satan  
 — 'brought wicked devices to pass,' and triumphed  
 Ps. xxxvii. above His grave. He silently 'rested' in God  
 5-7. His Father, and 'waited patiently' till it pleased  
 God to 'bring forth His righteousness as the  
 light.' This meek One has inherited the earth!  
 All power is given unto Him; all things are put  
 under His feet! All poor and mourning and  
 meek ones whom He has received to share His  
 sonship, as they follow their lowly King, can say:  
 Cf. 1 Cor. iii. 'All things are ours, for all are Thine; all are  
 21-23. ours, since we are Thine. Yet can we forego for  
 Thy dear sake what other men most prize, and  
 be as strangers on our own earth. See, Lord, we  
 Cf. Col. i. 24. are filling up the measure of Thy humiliation,  
 and being conformed unto Thy meekness!  
 Hasten, therefore, the dawning of Thine Advent  
 Day—the day of restitution and regeneration,  
 2 Pet. iii. 13. when in the new earth righteousness shall dwell,  
 and Thou and we, O Christ, shall inherit all  
 things. Then unto Thee, Thou crowned King of  
 meekness and Heir of earth, for Thy brethren's  
 sake, shall be endless honour, love, and worship!'

THE FOURTH BEATITUDE.

*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.—MATT. V. 6.*

*Blessed are ye that hunger now, for ye shall be filled. . . .  
Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger.—LUKE VI.  
21, 25.*

## THE FOURTH BEATITUDE.

THE simple idea always conveyed by the words 'right' and 'righteousness,' is that of conformity to a rule or standard of judgment. Given your straight line by which to test conduct, and that will be right or righteous which lies close alongside nor swerves at any point from the line. This seems indeed a somewhat hard, or, if you like, a low and mechanical way of looking at a thing so free and 'unstrained' in its 'quality' as virtue. One owns, I confess, to a certain prejudice against that man for whom nothing better is urged than the negative praise that he does not decline from a path surveyed and laid down to his feet by a measuring line; and we are even accustomed to remark, in disparagement of some proposed course of action, that it is 'no more than right.' Everything depends, however, upon the standard of comparison which we erect. To do no more than conform to some ideals of behaviour may not

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mean much; but you have only to pitch your ideal high enough, and then to conform to it will mean simply everything. Of course, the 'rightness' or straightness of conformity is in either case the same; judged by its own rule, the one is as 'righteous' as the other: only the one sort of 'righteousness' may bear no manner of likeness to the other. If it please society, for example, to lay down its rules for what shall be deemed courteous conduct in a given item of social intercourse, the well-bred man is 'right' in etiquette when he punctiliously conforms to that rule. This is a small enough thing. But if the Supreme Lawgiver has imposed on every man His own expressed nature as the ultimate standard of duty by which we are to judge of the highest nobility and loveliness attainable in moral action, then bare conformity, mere 'righteousness' in this sense, will be not at all a small thing, but the very greatest of all things. It will be perfection. Betwixt such extremes as these, infinite gradations lie. Chiefly, however, there is one standard short of the highest, one subordinate species of 'righteousness,' which is apt to embarrass us when we try to embrace the word in its full compass. I refer to that 'righteousness' between man and man which in English is better

expressed by 'justice.' The standard here is that of social right. To give every man his due; to weigh out to each the measure of reward or wage or respectful observance or affectionate honour which belongs to him: this is to be just. Such exact righteousness wins, as it merits, little praise. For this righteous, and no more than righteous, man, as St. Paul remarks, scarcely would one die. Let us not be misled, therefore, as if this were all for which it is blessed to hunger and thirst. There is an ampler and loftier righteousness, which covers this even-handed, strict-measuring justice, indeed, but covers more; which is not, like it, contrasted with goodness, but includes goodness; which lies to the plummet, not of equity in social relationships, but of the divine perfection itself. He is, by God's rule, the righteous man, who is not just only and blameless of wrong, but gentle too, and generous and merciful and loving unto death; whose heart is moulded on all sides after the image of God's own heart, so that his life comes up to, and at every point answers, the perfect law. For this, said Moses very long ago, 'shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God,'—those commandments whose sum is, 'Thou shalt love

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Rom. xiii. 7.

Rom. v. 7.

Cf. Tittmann, *de Synon. s. voce.*

Deut. vi. 25.

Deut. vi. 5;  
Lev. xix. 18.

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the Lord thy God with all thine heart,' and 'thy neighbour as thyself;' whose topmost line of judgment lieth high as heaven, 'Be ye perfect, even as your Father Which is in heaven is perfect.'

The truth is, that 'righteousness' in this sense of the word—that which it 'became' God's Son to 'fulfil' for us, and after which we ought to hunger and thirst—differs from 'holiness' not at all in respect of the character it designates, but only in the aspect under which it contemplates character. To be like God, considered simply as the moral character of a man who is perfectly separated from sin and sanctified, is to be holy. To be like God, under express comparison of the man with God as the rule by which he is to be judged, the rightful model or law for man: this is to be righteous. Holiness is our name for Godlike virtue, looking rather towards its opposite, the ungodly or unholy, from which it is clean severed. Righteousness is our name for the same virtue, as it looks at its own norm, the legal standard by which it has been adjusted, the perfection to which it has dutifully conformed. It is not, therefore, any elementary or partial thing which this Beatitude calls it blessed to desire. Of course, it is not the righteousness of Christ imputed as the legal basis

of our justification and acceptance; for that is got when we get the kingdom of heaven. Neither is it only one phase or side of inward rightness, one virtue among many; it is the comprehension of all virtues, the last attainment open to any created spirit, of absolute conformity in character and in act to that only blessed and supremely perfect One Who is the holy Lord God our Father. Blessed are they who, inflamed by a love for such conformity, and feeling all beneath this loftiest standard to be for them not 'right,' not in any true or satisfying sense their 'righteousness,' but utter wrongness, do aim at this, and with unappeased and enduring appetite hunger and thirst after it; blessed are they!

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This deep-set desire of the new heart after conformity to the divine likeness springs out of the three preceding experiences in this sevenfold blessed series, as from its roots: it is the stem from which branch out the three which follow. It links two groups—one of negative, and one of positive graces. How it embraces as its most characteristic or Godlike features these three which follow, mercifulness, heart purity, and the peacemaking which marks the sons of God, is evident of itself. How it arises as a thing of course out of the three past, will readily appear



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if we have obtained a true insight into their nature. For, first, Is a man grown poor in spiritual goods? He must needs long to be rich; and that not in title only, or in privilege, by being embraced within the kingdom of God, whose subjects have pardon and favour from their King; but in personal realization, by having that kingdom which is 'righteousness' first, then 'peace and joy,' brought within himself to enrich his impoverished moral nature. So shall **Rom. xiv. 17.** he 'have treasure in heaven.' Next, Has the man been crushed in tears to the earth under that mourning for sin which is true repentance? Then surely, when his tears are dried and the dust shaken from his head, he will rise to hate the sin he mourned for and to follow after holiness. Is he now meek, last of all? and is not this the way in which the meek Christ doth give souls rest? Let them bow their necks to take on them **Matt. xix. 21.** His yoke of righteousness, learning of Him; for now, unto the meek, that yoke is easy! In fact, the evangelical appetite for righteousness is an out-growth from all this past experience, forasmuch as it is an instinct of the child of God. The three preceding beatitudes have, as it were, canonized each step in the sinner's humiliation. The law has had its perfect work. According to **Matt. xi. 28, 29.**

the ideas of the Old Testament economy, and that verse in Isaiah on which Jesus has so far been founding, men have been made poor, sorrowful, meek—true confirmed penitents to the very core. Thrice blessed are they, because to them the Anointed of the Lord has brought good tidings: a kingdom of gratuitous grace to the poor; comfort of pardon to the sin-mourners; an inheritance to come for the meek: so that they have been made sons of God and heirs with Christ. Now, FOURTH BEATITUDE. Isa. lxi. 1. Rom. viii. 17. 'because they are sons, God hath sent the Spirit Gal. iv. 6. of His Son into their hearts;' and that Spirit worketh in them 'hunger and thirst' after the righteous Father's nature. It is the child's heart labouring to assert its born likeness to its Parent; 1 John iii. 7-10. it is the son choosing to shape his character by his Father's example; it is the Heir of an earth 'wherein dwelleth righteousness,' fitting himself 2 Pet. iii. 13. for his inheritance, even for 'the inheritance of Col. i. 12. the holy ones in light.'

Though springing out of these three first beatitudes, which I call the circle of humiliation, there is a new element apparent in this fourth one. These were negative; they weakened, they lowered, they discouraged; they were the emptying, saddening, and bruising, consequent on a knowledge of sin. This one, on the contrary, is

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positive and strong. It lifts itself up with wholesome and cheerful desire, and reaches out after far and high achievements in virtue. It is when Christian experience has plunged to the bottom and touched ground, that, like the fabled giant, it leaps up with mightiest resolve to win heaven. From its profoundest pit it sees the stars. Its *de profundis* cries are those which pierce heaven. What strikes us here, therefore, is a recoil from the beatitudes of descent; but it is a recoil so natural, that every one must have felt it. When have we longed most to be good, and risen up with the best courage to try, but just when we have been most miserable and heart-broken because of bygone failures? There needs, indeed, to be such a recoil. Without this counterpart to our experience of sin, life would want muscle and effort be paralyzed for lack of hope. Where the healthful appetite after righteousness is defectively developed in Christian life through undue brooding over faults or nursing of despondent grief, there Christianity grows pale-complexioned, sickly, and womanish. There needs the irrepressible hunger to be and to do what is right, in order that a man may be maintained in the activities of spiritual manhood; and this desire, when inspired with promises of success and

ardent through high enthusiasm, grows into a holy ambition, a noble and eager daring, covetous of the best gifts. It is true that there is still pain in such hunger and thirst of the soul. Man never attains his moral ideal. Dissatisfaction with himself is, in fact, the root of spiritual desire; and here, as in all desire unaccomplished, there must be pain. This pain, adhering to the fourth Beatitude, serves to ally it still to those that went before. What Jesus here calls blessed is not yet the unmixed gladness of attainment, of being actually merciful and pure of heart and makers of peace. As yet, it is the beatitude only of desire, not of possession; turbid still, and urgent and unappeased. Nevertheless, thanks to our Lord Christ, it *is* a beatitude. Even to hunger and to thirst after righteousness is, under the gospel, blessed; for such appetite is sure of food.

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1 Cor. xii. 31.

This recognition by God of the unholy soul's desire after holiness, with the promise that it shall be fed to the full, has given to the mere existence of such desire in any person a new and vast moral value, because it has given it hopefulness. The promise of Christ makes it no more a weak or barren thing to desire to be right; it makes it in a supreme sense blessed. The

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worst of men have at times a sort of weariness of sin, a certain passing shallow wish that they were better than they are, or some dim half-formed and effortless desire after an excellence which is far off and out of reach. Even that is more blessed than the want of it. But better than that, the best of heathen men, before Christ and since, have been consumed in vain by a sore but nearly hopeless hunger for perfection; tortured by dreams of a golden age won back, an island of the blest where righteousness should reign, and all be pure, and strife be over, and the tempestuous contrary winds of passion laid to halcyon repose. For this moral regeneration it has been the fate of the noblest unilluminated men to pine, and in ineffectual efforts after it to waste their lives away. Was this, except in a measure, a blessed thing? Nay, even those sainted Hebrew fathers, who, before the coming of the Christ, received the promises; was there not even in their hunger after righteousness a sharpness as of men denied their bread, while they waited for the time when a feast should be spread in the mountain of God, and the meek, long sick with deferred hope, should eat at length and be satisfied? Not such blessedness as theirs is ours. For us, who are children of the kingdom, the table is

Isa. xxv. 6.

Ps. xxii. 26.

spread and the bread broken. Christ is held out to each craving Christian soul as the actual Sustainer of right purposes, Enabler to right performance, and Satisfier of the righteous appetite. The Christian's hunger, therefore, need not be faithless or desperate, neither fitful nor agonizing, nor faint with delay. It is a very steadfast and buoyant pursuing after and pressing on and overcoming and attaining. Our daily desire finds daily supply; our need never outruns the provision given, but, as it goes on to feed, its language is, 'I can do all things through Christ, my Bread, Phil. iv. 13. Who strengtheneth me.'

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Those features of special blessedness which I have now indicated in the moral appetite of the Christian deserve a little minuter notice.

In the first place, the Christian's appetite has in it this excellent blessedness, that it has found the right object of desire. The soul's true food has been set before his eyes, and he has been taught to hunger after that. The bulk of unbelieving men, when they desire at all to be good, desire only to break some one vexatious habit, or escape such penalties of sin as presently press upon them. The deepest-exercised of the heathen could only breathe, I think, after a certain theoretical perfection of their own nature,

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- without truly knowing wherein that lay, or how to attain it. Even pre-Christian believers had set before them as the object of desire nothing better than the rigid observance of a written law, —a law expressed in no living person, but ‘en-
- 2 Cor. iii. 7. graven in stones.’ But the righteousness towards which Christians labour is neither partial nor shadowy nor impersonal. Not partial; for it is the whole moral image of God, high and broad
- Cf. Matt. v. 48. and full and faultless, like the divine character itself. The desire which His spiritual children cherish is one which does not pick and choose its favourite virtues, winking at some shortcomings, or avoiding duties that are unwelcome. It does not seek to be in measure good for the sake of being a little happier. Honestly and wholeheartedly loving goodness for its own sake and for God’s, it embraces all that God is and would have us to be. It cannot be ‘filled’ till it has
- Phil. iii. 12. ‘attained’ and is made ‘already perfect.’ Neither is it undefined or shadowy; for the Christian’s desire after divine perfection is one subject to law. Christian holiness builds up no airy phantasm, the coinage of the brain, to call that its divine ideal. It desires not to be perfect only to please itself after a fashion of its own, but to be *righteous*, conformed to the standard of God’s law.

The vague aspiration of speculative thinkers after some more or less arbitrary optimism of life, has really no place in Christian ethics. The Christian recognises authority as imposing on him a standard of right. His Father's will is law, and the essence of his virtue is subjection. He aspires, indeed, but it is to no supererogatory merit; no self-chosen summit of more than average holiness; no pillar-top of saintship, on which spiritual pride may stand to be admired. He aspires to be righteous, and no more; content if he can just conform, and, in conforming, 'do but that which it was his duty to do.' He thirsts to do what he can, and be able to do what he ought. He fears to be an unworthy, nor is displeased to be after all an 'unprofitable, servant.' Yet this is very far from the heartless endeavours of one under law to come up to a stern code of orders, whose unyielding terms make no allowance for our poor performance and have no power to draw us up to them. The divine image to which it is our Father's will that we should be conformed lives before us, and beside us too, in the alluring form of our Brother-Helper, our kinsman Redeemer and near Friend. Very sublime, indeed, towers above us His moral height. Yet it attracts, it does not repel. We see what we ought to be,

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Luke xvii.  
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and what we wish to be, live and move before us in One Who is nearer to us and dearer than all besides; One in Whose perpetual presence and beneath the breathing of Whose personal Spirit we daily stand. This privilege have we above even elder saints. The hunger of a Christian soul after righteousness is now a hunger simply to be like Jesus, a hunger whetted evermore by the vision of Him in His beauty. The conformity of righteousness is desired now, not as conformity to a hard or cold imperative from heaven, but as assimilation through sympathy to the very heart which for ever beats and glows in holy love within the Beloved of our hearts.

Cf. 2 Cor. iii.  
18.

A second blessedness, and the central one, attached to this Christian appetite for righteousness, is that 'it shall be filled.' What reason have we to thank God that Christian desire for righteousness is not a famishing! It is not such gnawing as in men who starve; not the agony of parched, baked lips, which cannot beg for water by reason of their thirst. There might have been seen on earth this sorest of all dearths. God knows, there has been, perchance, here and there. But, I say, there might have been seen over all the earth only this sort of desperate anguished craving, and no other; souls quick to

feel sin's shame, and on fire with longing to be free of it; souls who, for sheer want of God and righteousness, should languish in desire, yet desire in vain, and vainly desiring, perish. There is a need in sinful men which God might have quickened into hot appetite; a need of righteousness as a necessity of the soul's life, which could have grown beneath His angry breath into hunger and thirst for it; while yet He might have left the agony of their emptiness unfed, the flame of that desire unslaked. He might have made all men on earth endure the wretchedness of realizing what is the righteousness they have lost, and being consumed with a remorseful yet faithless desperate pining to be what once they were: even as, for aught any man can tell us, such hunger may be in hell, and such thirst in spirits that get no cup, no drop even, of cold water in the name of Christ. He might, but (thanks be to His grace) He has not. Before 'the poor and needy sought water' where no water was, the Lord prevented their desire; 'He opened a river in high places, and a fountain in the midst of the valley.' 'He opened heaven's doors' and 'rained down' this true bread upon us; 'He smote that rock,' and from the cleft of its side 'waters gushed out,' 'the streams overflowed.'

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Luke xvi. 24;  
cf. Matt. x.  
42.

Isa. xli. 17,  
18.

Ps. lxxviii.  
23, 24; cf.  
John vi. 32.  
Ps. lxxviii.  
20.

- FOURTH BEATITUDE.** — We famish no more, therefore, though we are hungry still. Ours is not the hunger now of the penniless who perish unrelieved, nor the thirst of outcast Ishmael when 'the water was spent in the bottle;' it is the healthful appetite of children for their father's table. Those who have tasted once of the Lord's grace need never suffer the pain and hopeless consumption of unsatisfied desire; but they ought to have a hunger, more regular, if less painful; hunger day by day for daily bread. Fed once in an hour of spiritual desire, they ought to know the way back to the old provision, labouring not for many perishing meats, but for more of the bread which endureth; never thirsting indeed for a change of spring, but thirsting to drink deeper of the water which Christ hath given. It is in the person of the spiritual and uplifted Christ we find our fill of practical righteousness. God has broken, as Samuel Rutherford says, 'the great fair loaf, Christ,' and poured out in banquet-gladness the wine-cup of His salvation. The second sacrament seals the promise of this text, even as the first sealed in water the blessedness of the 'poor' and 'mournful' and 'meek.' But it is not in the occasional sacrament only, it is in the inward demands of every day of duty, that Christ works in us a detailed
- Gen. xxi. 15.*
- Luke xi. 3.*
- John vi. 27.*
- John iv. 14.*
- Letter xviii.*  
(ed. 1863).

conformity to the Father. When to a meek desirous soul He comes to live within it by the Holy Ghost, and busies Himself with such gracious work as the subduing of an evil temper or the cherishing of a kind one, then He is filling that soul with righteousness. When He confirms, by some auspicious providence or word in season, a wavering purpose to do well, or secretly softens afresh a hardening heart, or braces up the mind to endurance, or makes envy yield to kindness, and revenge relent; when He checks equivocation on the tongue, drives the tempted soul to kneel for help, or coaxes the anxious to leave its care on God: then He is filling soul after soul with righteousness.

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For filling like this, through the constant presence and agency within us of the Spirit of Christ, we cannot have too frequent hunger. It was the mark of the First-Born among His many brethren, that it was His meat to do His Father's will. It is the mark of our sonship too. Let us therefore resort daily to the table of the Lord. I do not mean to our memorial and symbolic supper-table, although it is a healthy sign of God's children when they ask for that also to be often spread within His house; but I mean such inward drawing upon the help of Jesus for the

Rom. viii. 29.  
John iv. 34.

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doing of God's will as a man may have at all times. Be not content unless you are doing the will of God; nay, not content unless you are doing it better, and doing more of it, to-day than yesterday: but when you are, be satisfied as a child is with its food. Let us be sure we court this beatitude of desire. The more we have of rightness, let us desire the more of it. With the more we get of it, indeed, the more we shall perceive our need; growth producing hunger, even as hunger when it is fed produces growth. He who feels satisfied ought then to be most of all dissatisfied with himself; nor think he has attained to anything so long as there is anything to which he has not attained. Such noble discontent is the hope of the soul. Satisfaction, contentment for Christian men, there can be none short of righteousness in its supreme form—the righteousness of the Son's perfect likeness to the Father's character. For that let us hunger on; after that let us thirst: so shall ours be the blessedness, first, of desire; and then, the better blessedness of attainment; for 'we shall be filled.'

**THE FIFTH BEATITUDE.**

*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.—*  
**MATT. V. 7.**

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## THE FIFTH BEATITUDE.

**T**HIS is the first of a new group of three <sup>FIFTH</sup> Beatitudes, which stand in their order <sup>BEATITUDE.</sup> — behind the central one of Desire, just as the <sup>Matt. v. 6.</sup> opening group of three stand before it. As the first three, the trilogy of spiritual humiliation, lead up to and produce that blessed hunger after divine righteousness; so the second three, a trilogy of characteristic Christian graces, are the fulfilment of the soul's hunger. The quality common to all these three, which gives them unity, is this: that they are elements in that righteousness after which the soul is breathing. Looked at in this light, they confirm our view of that righteousness as conformity to the divine character under its noblest aspects. For, from the wide field of the virtues, our Lord selects three which have as little to do as any with that lower type of character which men usually call 'righteous' or 'just.' Here, as throughout His whole teaching, He rather takes for granted the



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commonplace virtues of integrity, veracity, and fair dealing. He passes in silence by the famous quartette of cardinal virtues so extolled by the heathen moralists: justice, I mean, and fortitude, and temperance, and prudence. Those features of a righteous character, which the Pagan and the Jewish world alike had understood, appreciated, and praised long before His day, He could afford to assume in any analysis of His kingdom. What was new in the righteousness He taught, was a side of character diviner and more rare, the beauty of which it was reserved for Him to reveal Who was the image of the Father. The loveliness, not of pity only, but of mercy; the superiority of forgiveness over revenge; the divineness of being, not what proud men termed magnanimous, but humbly generous; the beatitudes, in one word, of lowly gentle-hearted charity, like the charity of the Father: this it was Christ's to teach. These and the like of these are the qualities which mark a man's righteousness as wearing a Christian complexion. After these, therefore, the Christian soul hungers. If it be blessed, as it is, to be just and true and brave and wise, these are at least beatitudes which are spoken outside as well as inside the kingdom of God. They are graces of nature as

well as graces of grace. It is not till our righteousness comes to exceed the righteousness, FIFTH  
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not of a Pharisee, but of a heathen, of a philosopher, of a man of the world, that we rise into the region of exclusively Christian holiness, and enjoy the beatitudes which are the peculiar portion of Christian hearts.

The three qualities in this group, then, may be taken as typical characteristics of Christian righteousness, representative of that whole complex of moral features after which Christ's disciple has been taught to hunger. Among these three selected qualities themselves, I hope it will appear that there is an order of progress,—an order which, I am inclined to think, bears some correspondence to the order of the first three. Take the first in each group. The compassionate helpfulness, which comes foremost, springs out of that experience of spiritual poverty which made a man dependent on the compassionate help of God. Take next the second in each. The purity of heart, which sees the divine light of His face, has commonly to be reached through deep soul-sorrow and tears of repentance. As to the last pair, it is surely the meek man who has renounced his inheritance on earth rather than fight for it, who is most ready to come between

Cf. ver. 7  
with ver. 3.

Cf. ver. 8  
with ver. 4.

Cf. ver. 9  
with ver. 5.

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- his brethren when they struggle for bigger portions, and by the charm of his own meekness to compose their selfish feuds. Neither can you transpose the order of this second group of three without feeling that you have spoilt them. A kindly and active charity is an early outgrowth of religious experience; and it may be very real, while the motives of the heart are still mixed and the character turbid. Far more advanced is that Christian whose inner heart-life is burnt clear of self-interest, vanity, and every restless earthly element; so that in calm simplicity he can look straight into the serene eye of God.
- Ver. 7. Nor is it of much use to play the *rôle* of peace-maker in this jealous world, until first one's motives are too pure to be suspected, and one's own life is at perfect peace with God and men. We must respect the law of progress in Heaven's kingdom, and be content to follow the order of our King. Yet, while we stand only at the lower, or perchance the lowest stage, we may at least be hungering after the higher; for if ours is not yet the whole beatitude of attainment, ours may be at least the beatitude of desire.
- Ver. 8.
- Ver. 9.

One more remark on the group before I descend to this seventh verse. All the three graces now

to be called blessed, are given to the soul in fulfilment of that promise in the sixth verse: 'They shall be filled.' They are gifts wrought by the Holy Ghost in the heart that desires righteousness; and in themselves, as well as in their results, they are most blessed. It is not good to be 'poor,' except one is thereby to come to better riches; nor to 'mourn,' unless one be comforted. In all the four preceding Beatitudes, the promise annexed was essential to the blessedness. Henceforth there seems small need for any promise at all. The very quality is itself blessing enough. To have a generous or pure heart, and to restore peace where strife was, are things which carry their own reward, and crown their own heads with gladness. Yet they are each one crowned by Jesus with a special promise, just like the foregoing. Grace puts an added blessing on its own gift of grace. Only the promises now change their character. So long as the sinner had no better thing to show than need, a real sad sense of moral want, and a real honest cry for moral improvement; so long each blessing formed a perfect contrast to the state of soul which it blessed. Was the soul poor? The promise was a kingdom. Did it mourn? The promise was comfort. But now the sinner begins to be a

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Ver. 3.

Ver. 4.

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saint. He possesses some good thing; and the reward is not in contrast with, but in complement or fulfilment of, what he already has. Has he mercy for men? He gets mercy from God. Is he pure within? He sees the Pure One above. The promise is a reward answering the gracious quality possessed; not now a supply contrived to meet a need experienced. We must still therefore expect to find, and search for, some correspondence between the quality blessed and the blessing promised. The rewards of spiritual life are not haphazard things. They follow always fixed laws: this law as to their quality, Gal. vi. 7. 'Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap;' and as to quantity, this other law, 'He that hath, to him shall be given.' To the merciful, no less than mercy; and mercy in that proportion in which he himself is merciful. Mark iv. 25, and parallels.

Let us now try to gain some clear conception what this blessed quality of mercy is, whence it springs, and how it is rewarded.

What we properly and commonly mean by our English word 'merciful,' is readiness to overlook or pardon a wrong; and when we use it in this way, it covers pretty well both the placableness which is easily induced to pass over wrong done

to oneself, and that clemency which in the dispensers of earthly justice remits the punishment of a public offender. It comes very close to simple forgivingness of disposition. Now it is from this idea we must start in the Beatitude of Jesus. For the mercifulness of man to man is based by our Christian religion on the experienced mercy of God. Before we can read the text as it stands: 'The merciful shall obtain mercy,' we must take for granted this earlier word: The merciful have obtained mercy. It is they who have first obtained mercy for themselves who are able to show it to others. It was because God for Christ's sake had forgiven the disciples at Ephesus, that St. Paul urged them to forgive one another. That this is entirely in a line with the lessons of Jesus Himself, we gather from His parable of the unmerciful debtor. The shocking and inhuman feature about that man's conduct was not simply that he took severe legal means to recover his just debt of an hundred *denarii*; but that he did so after the Sovereign, whose revenue he had himself embezzled in office, had graciously cancelled an enormous deficit of ten thousand talents. The question which struck him dumb was this: 'Oughtest not thou to have had "mercy" on thy fellow-servant, even as I

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Cf. Neh. ix.  
17: 'ready to  
pardon, . . .  
and merci-  
ful'

Eph. iv. 32.

Matt. xviii.  
21-35.

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Cf. Ps. lxxii.  
12 and Dan.  
ix. 9.

had "mercy" on thee?'<sup>1</sup> It is in the divine mercy that ours finds not only its measure, but also its ground; and it is the prodigious obligation under which each man finds himself to the divine mercy, which makes all unmercifulness betwixt man and man so unseemly and even monstrous. So vast, indeed, is this disproportion between the talents and the *denarii*, between what God is solicited to forgive in any of us, and what we have to forgive in one another, that it seems scarcely proper to use the same word of the two cases. Mercy, in this sense of pardon, is rarely used in Scripture except of God: it hardly seems becoming to use it of one sinner to his fellow; for to God, as His prerogative, 'belongeth mercy' not less than power. On the other hand, Holy Scripture is never weary, from its beginning to its close, of extolling the divine mercy. It is 'great;' it is 'plenteous;' it is 'abundant;' it is 'everlasting;' a dozen times we are told that it 'endureth for ever;' it is 'high as heaven,' nay, 'above the heavens,' and the 'earth is full' of it; God is 'rich' in it; He 'magnifies' it; He 'delights in' it; while, as for the man who is its object, it 'follows' him

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xviii. 33. 'Compassion' and 'pity' in the A. V. represent the same verb *ἰλάω* in the Greek.

through life; it 'compasses him about;' it 'crowns' him like a coronal.<sup>1</sup> Well may sinful men laud this attribute of the divine character, and hold it precious; for, in St. Paul's words, it is 'according to His mercy He saved us.' The first three beatitudes of this series, the Beatitudes of Regeneration, which meet the conscious contrite sinner with 'exceeding great and precious promises,' are all utterances of the divine mercy in its plenitude, promptitude, and ungrudgingness. These are the gifts to us unworthy, of Him Who hath mercy on us. And the man who has been received in his guilt with generous-handed mercy so divine as this, is he whose first step in practical righteousness must be to become himself merciful. A forgiving spirit is the earliest fruit of God's forgiveness.

Mark, next, the converse relation which holds betwixt these two—God's mercy to us, and ours

<sup>1</sup> See, for these expressions,—

(1) Num. xiv. 18; 2 Sam. xxiv. 14; Ps. cxlv. 8.

(2) Ps. lxxxvi. 5, ciii. 8.

(3) 1 Pet. i. 3.

(4) Ps. c. 5.

(5) Refrain of Ps. cxxxvi., besides often elsewhere.

(6) Ps. ciii. 11, cviii. 4, cxix. 64.

(7) Eph. ii. 4.

(8) Gen. xix. 19.

(9) Mic. vii. 18.

(10) Ps. xxiii. 6, xxxii. 10, ciii. 4.



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to one another. Till God set us the example, on the one hand, there was scant mercy among men ; on the other hand, the exercise of forgiveness to one another has now become the condition on which men continue to receive, without forfeiting it, the forgiveness of Heaven. There is no forgiveness for the unforgiving. I do not need to insist on it that this is the doctrine of Christ. It is the point of that parable already cited, in which the unmerciful satrap has his own pardon revoked even after it had been granted, and is in the end struck by the doom which at the first his Sovereign's clemency averted. It is expressly asserted by our Lord, that ' if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.' Nay, this condition of the divine mercy is by Him imbedded in our model form of prayer, so that no child can repeat his *Pater Noster* without being reminded that an implacable spirit makes worship unacceptable, and shuts against the irreconcilable brother the door to our Father's grace. It is heaven's law, as St. James hath it : ' To the merciless, merciless judgment.' It is not needful to suppose that God ever has to do what the mortal king did in the parable,—revoke an act of pardon once passed, but passed on the assumption, afterwards falsified, that the forgiven would

Matt. xviii.  
23 ff.

Matt. vi. 15.

Matt. vi. 12;  
cf. v. 23.

Cf. Jas. ii.  
13, Greek.

prove forgiving. God's forgiven ones never turn out implacable ; nor does His forgiveness admit of recall. Yet let the man who flatters himself that he has received, or is likely to receive, mercy from Heaven for his offences, look well to the temper in which he meets his offending brother. If within his heart he feels none of that humble charity which is the child of repentance and which prompts generous excuses for a brother, which welcomes the least approach to an apology and longs for a chance of making up the peace again ; if he can detect in himself only an unyielding temper, a severe judgment, a disposition to stand upon his rights at all costs, or the resentment which grudges to forego its revenge and is loth to speak a frank word of reconciliation ; if he is a man hard to be won, and more apt to exact the last penny than to melt at a cry for mercy : let that man take his sweet retaliation and nurse his anger if he please ; but let him also throw away his hope of Heaven's grace, and prepare himself as he best can to receive from the Almighty Creditor of us all the measure which *Matt. vii. 2.* he has meted—for his own faults, too, 'judgment without mercy.'

This is more than any man dare do. The truth is, so long as we are in this world, we stand

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betwixt sins behind and sins before, with past forgiveness to be thankful for, I hope, but also with future forgiveness to be prayed for. It is this position of earthly men, midway among the forgivenesses of the Almighty, which continually summons them to a merciful temper. It is this which lends such weight to the Christian appeal to the implacable: 'You have asked the great God not to deal out to you your due, but to be merciful to you, a miserable offender. Can you now press hardly on this brother who, in his sinning, has sinned against you as well as Heaven, and from both you and Heaven begs forgiveness? Or, if this cannot move you; if neither humility, nor a sense of God's goodness, nor fellow-feeling with a fellow-sinner, can make your obdurate mind relent, do but remember that life for you means sin; that no day leaves you unaccused before Heaven's tribunal; that to-morrow you will have fresh faults to confess to God, and fresh pardon to implore. Remember that, deaf as you are now to your brother's plea, so deaf will be God's ear to yours. When, before the face of your Judge, your soul cries in that day for mercy, this brother, denied all mercy now, shall cry aloud and louder yet for justice.' He must be a very righteous man indeed who dares to be unmerciful!

This quality of placability, or forgivingness, is that exercise of 'mercy' which is primarily suggested by the form of the Beatitude. But the word which our Lord uses has a larger sense, and His blessing covers a far wider area of character. The Good Samaritan, for example, 'showed mercy on' the wounded traveller of our Saviour's tale. Our Lord 'had mercy on' the victim of a legion of spirits. The soul of Dives is represented in the parable as begging 'mercy' from Father Abraham; and the standing cry of the leprous and the blind and the distempered who besieged the Good Physician of Galilee, was: 'Lord, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us!'<sup>1</sup> In fact, this 'mercy' of the text, and of all these texts, is a very wide word. It covers both the kindly feeling and the kindly act; and it stretches itself over both the great departments of human necessity—men's sufferings and men's sins. The same attitude of mind which makes one relenting or forgiving to the penitent offender, makes one also pity and relieve the suppliant sufferer. He who sins becomes a candidate for mercy so soon as he acknowledges his sin. He who suffers has a claim on mercy so soon as he discloses his suffering. And the merciful man is he who not only feels compassion

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Luke x. 37.

Mark v. 19,  
Greek.

Luke xvi. 24.

<sup>1</sup> See passages in Bruder, *s.v.* ἔλεος.

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for the misfortunes of the wretched, but also gives expression to his compassion by active beneficence. It is in this wide sense of the word that Jesus is said in Hebrews to become the 'merciful' High Priest of His brethren; in this wide sense that the Good Samaritan becomes a type of the purest and least selfish mercy; in this wide sense that our Lord brackets 'mercy' along with 'justice' and 'faith,' as the three 'weightier matters' of the divine law. Read the Beatitude under this ampler light, and you see the magnificent beneficence of God proposing itself as the model for our handling of one another. Here on earth we little men jostle one another in a crowd where each is bent on making room for himself. We trample, we push, we elbow one another; the hurt one scowls on the hurter; the strong mocks at the weak. We all do wrong, and suffer it; few ask pardon; fewer grant it. While every one suffers, only a few succeed; the most part go down; many of the feebler perish, trodden under foot. The air meantime is thick with cries of rage and groans of pain—a chorus of wailing pierced by imprecations; but who cares much, so long as he has a hope to win his selfish ends? But see, over all these broods, with the pain and unrest of infinite compassion, the Father of us

Heb. ii. 17.

Luke x. 37.

Matt. xxiii.  
23.

all: up to Him go curses and threats and sobs and prayers, and the complaint of brothers against brothers. From the Father's bosom there has come One Who mingles unlooked for in our throng, a Brother indeed. He bears a message of mercy from our Father: to the rude who repent, He promises forgiveness; to the down-trodden who pray, He brings help. Around the weak He throws His arm, to shield them from the violent; He bids the injured bless whom they cursed before; into the wounds of the wounded He pours oil from heaven; to His brothers He sets the example of brotherliness; and amid the hubbub of clashing earthly voices we hear Him send up this clear, sweet rallying cry of a new humanity: 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.' The heart of God has felt that this world, in which wrong retaliates upon wrong, and both the doer and the sufferer of the wrong is to be pitied, is the place above all things for mercy; for sweet, gracious, tender-eyed, divinest mercy, with a large soft heart and a full yet opening hand. Here, where all men sin, is no place for censoriousness, but for clemency; not for revenge, but for grace; not for impatience, but for long-suffering. Here, where all men suffer, is no place for bitterness, but for gentleness; not

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for clamour, but for pity ; not for self-assertion, but for meek self-sacrifice and humblest charity.

I take Jesus, then, to be the mercy of God translated into act, embodied in a person : it follows that the fundamental grace of His kingdom's righteousness is mercy. Tender-heartedness flowing out into practical helpful beneficence is the world's want ; it is the divine response to human selfishness ; it is, in a word, Christ's life : therefore it is the first virtue of a Christian. The only virtue it is not ; but it leads the way. It is as rare as it is blessed. To melt at the woes of others is common ; the Christian is gentle also to their faults. The sentimental weep for imagined distresses ; the Christian seeks out real ones. Mock mercy makes light of the wrongs which others bear ; Christian mercy forgives its own. Some love the luxury of hearing about wretchedness ; it is the labour to relieve it which is Christian. There is a pseudo-mercy which lets people alone to sin ; Christ's mercy is to save them from their sins. It is hard to be found amid the counterfeits which carry colourable imitations of it ; but when you do light upon the genuine mercy which models itself on Christ's, is large and pure as His, as void of self-interest, and leagued, like His own, with justice and with wisdom, it is a *grace* which carries with it a triple blessedness.

## THE SIXTH BEATITUDE.



*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.—*  
MATT. V. 8.

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IN the court language of ancient Oriental despotisms, where the Sovereign was revered as if he were the vicegerent of Heaven, to 'see the king's face' stood for the highest felicity of the most favoured subjects. It was the petition of the disgraced prince Absalom, after he had for two full years resided in the capital without being received at his father's palace: 'Now therefore let me see the king's face; and if there be iniquity in me, let him kill me!' 'Happy are these thy servants,' said the African queen to Solomon; happy in this, that they 'stand continually before thee.' So the seven chief princes of the Medo-Persian Empire who sat first in the kingdom of Ahasuerus, were 'which saw the king's face.' The same magnificent phraseology passed from the court to the temple. In the Hebrew State, Jehovah was the national Sovereign; and the reigning king was, in no flattering hyperbole, but in constitutional

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2 Sam. xiv.  
32; cf. iii. 13  
and xiv. 24.

1 Kings x. 8.

Ester i. 14.

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law, His elected vicegerent. The temple was His palace, the most holy place His chamber of presence and of audience; and the one thing desired by His devout and favoured servants was to behold His beauty; their prayer, that His face would shine on them; their hope, to see His face in righteousness, and one day be satisfied with His likeness.

Ps. xxvii. 4,  
xvii. 15. See  
Num. vi. 25;  
Ps. xxxi. 16,  
lxvii. 1, etc.

This theophany, or visible discovery of the Divine Being, which was given to the best period of Hebrew history, was a prefigure of the incarnation—the chief theophany of all time—in which, through a human character and life, there has been discovered to us all the ethical beauty and splendour of the Godhead. To ‘see God’ now must for ever mean nothing else than this:

Cf. John i.  
14, 17, 18;  
2 Cor. iv. 6.

See John vi.  
46; cf. Matt.  
xi. 27.

Cf. John i.  
18; Col. i. 15;  
1 Tim. vi. 16.

to see His ‘truth and grace’ mirrored in the face of that Man, Who alone of all men on earth ‘is of God, and hath seen the Father.’ Whatever this sight of the divine glory in the incarnate Son, Who is the image of the invisible Father, may mean, or of whatever sort it is, it has clearly two stages of unequal fulness; and in both its stages it is less a material than a purely spiritual vision. The earlier or lower stage of it, such as is possible to saints who are still in this life, cooped up and hedged in with gross unpurged

flesh, is indeed so much less than the perfection of vision, that, when compared with that which shall be, it barely deserves the name. So long as we walk only 'by faith,' we can hardly be said to walk 'by sight' at all. It certainly is not a personal, or in any sense material, vision. It is not yet a 'seeing Him as He is,' nor a knowing of Him as we are known. The sight we may now have is like seeing a reflection in a very imperfect mirror; it is like the hint one gets of a truth through an obscure riddle. It is second-hand; it is dim; it is enigmatical. It is sight, however. It is a knowledge of the Divine Being in His moral beauty, of that direct, intuitional, self-verifying sort which we can only liken to such assurance of an object's existence as one gets through the sense of vision. Given only certain moral conditions, and it is possible even here to discern so unmistakeably in the blessed person of Jesus Christ the splendid lineaments of divinity, that the seer shall know, not by others' testimony, or laboured argument, or far-fetched proof of reason, but by insight, that Jesus is, that He is God, and that God in Him is glorious.

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2 Cor. v. 7.

1 John iii. 2;  
1 Cor. xiii. 12.

δι' ὁμορφου  
ἢ αἰνιγματι,  
1 Cor. xiii. 12.

But the perfection of spiritual vision—the sight which supersedes faith, drowns conjecture,

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- and sweeps up doubt in certainty—is kept for the place of the blessed. This deepest and sweetest of Christ's beatitudes seized the souls of His two noblest scholars. Paul and John alike found in it their ultimate expression for the enraptured communion of the perfected state.
- 1 Cor. xiii. 12. To see 'face to face' is the expression of the
- 1 John iii. 2. one; to 'see Him as He is' of the other: the apostle of ardent logic and the apostle of devout contemplation meet in words like these. Further can neither go than, free from hindering earth, to stand, and, with absorbed and self-forgetting and merely passive silent ecstasy, gaze and gaze for ever into that celestial Countenance which expresseth with perfection what transcendeth language, the mingled majesty and sweetness of
- 1 Tim. i. 17. 'the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God.' The promise of this vision has passed from Scripture into the most sacred speech of every Christian age; the hope of it is the last longing of the deepest Christian hearts. To Origen, to Augustine, to Dante, to Aquinas, to Bernard, to Calvin, to Bunyan, the beatific vision of God has equally meant the perfection of immediate knowledge and the perfection of spiritual rapture. Higher than this desire cannot rise; further than this created capacity cannot go.

Nothing sweeter, nothing loftier, nothing heaven-  
lier, can heart devise or tongue frame, than to be  
deemed worthy of that honour of which Jesus  
spoke when He prayed and said, 'That they may  
be with Me where I am; that they may behold  
My glory which Thou hast given Me!' SIXTH  
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In all its stages, whether as begun now or as  
hereafter consummated, this vision of God is a  
moral act, made possible by the moral condition  
of the man. It is the act of a soul. Here at  
least, and in this life, no bodily sight even of the  
Man Jesus is permitted; and supposing that,  
with resurrection organs, the saints should here-  
after behold the resurrection body of Jesus, that  
by itself would be in no true sense a vision of  
God. 'God is a Spirit;' and it is spiritually John iv. 24.  
He must be seen or known. Even Christ we  
know no more, as saith St. Paul, 'after the flesh.' 2 Cor. v. 16.  
The invisible Godhead is not to be beheld through  
material media. It offers nothing of which  
organs of sense can give us proof. 'That which  
may be' seen or 'known' of the Godhead, is its  
godlikeness, its divine attributes of wisdom and  
(especially) of goodness. The true divine lies in  
moral character; and it is moral character, it is  
the transcendent perfection and beauty of the  
Divine Being as a moral person, which that soul

Of. *Quærens*,  
Rom. i. 19,  
20.

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Rom. x. 10. must see who sees God. It is therefore 'with the heart,' or moral nature, that man not only 'believes,' but also sees; and the condition of vision with the heart, is that the heart be 'pure.' To see God is so far from a privilege which might be granted to any one, that God Himself could not make Himself visible in the glory of His moral character to any creature whose own moral character was either undeveloped or defiled. We can understand this by analogies within our own experience. A child, for example, may grow up for years in the same house with his father, and know him to be kind and pleasant indeed, and very dear, yet never see him to be a man of exceptional strength and nobleness and completeness of virtue, a rarely heroic or saintly man; for the soul of a little child is not itself grown to such moral stature as to be capable of measuring the morally great. Again, a bad man with a mean or twisted moral nature may be in contact with a person of almost angelic purity, infantile sweetness, humility, and disinterestedness, yet fail to see or be attracted by the beauty of that lovely life; for the bad heart projects its own badness, and wants the power to appreciate, or even to discern, unselfish virtue. Just so, to see in God His godlike qualities of purity, truth,

generosity, pitifulness, or mercy—so to see them as at all to recognise them for what they are, supremely admirable and ineffably to be loved and rejoiced in—asks a right and clean state of heart, with a love for the good, and an unselfish delight in what is better than itself. To see God at all or in any measure in this life, requires such cleanness and sweetness of heart to have been begun in us. So long as we are ourselves proud, lovers of evil, with a conceit in ourselves greater than in any other, or possessed by dark, selfish, or vicious passions, we cannot see God's goodness to be good. We may speak of it, indeed, with praise; but we lack the indispensable moral condition for feeling its beauty and divineness. We love the darkness; and the light which we do not love, we cannot see. The moral discipline of Christian life ought to be one life-long education of the heart in this faculty which appreciates God, this power of seeing goodness with thorough love and enjoyment of it. Throughout life, however, we continue to be no better judges of the Divine than the little child of a great father. Something we can see: His kindness to ourselves; His condescension; His readiness to pardon; His bounty in bestowal; these paternal features as they appear in His treatment of us

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in Jesus Christ: and this much, when seen by the lowly saint, is quite enough to ravish him with admiration and affection for the Father Who is in heaven. But God is vastly more and greater. These qualities themselves, which lie on that side of His nature which He has been pleased to turn towards earth, have a superlativeness about them which we now want width or insight of vision to measure; while above and beyond them lie perfections of a more awful magnificence, of which we here learn the names and little more. What can the best of saints be said to see of the divine holiness, or the divine jealousy, or the divine justice, or the divine wrath, or the divine peace, or the divine unchangeableness, or the divine complacency, or the divine interchange of love betwixt the Persons, or that divine joy which we call the blessedness of God? What little children are we, to have a Father so sublime! How unfit to discern, what He is at no pains to conceal, the lofty and awful parts of His infinite nature! The earth is full of His goodness; but to see His glory we must wait for heaven.

Ps. xxxiii. 5.

So far, then, we can block out, in the rough at least, what our King meant, when, to all earlier

blessednesses of the divine life, He added a beatitude on the pure in heart, because they shall see God. For practical uses, that we too may attain, by what gradual and laborious steps we can, to the moral condition of a vision so supremely blessed, it will be good for us to look a little more minutely into this grace so richly crowned.

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When Jesus, speaking as a Jew in an audience of Jews, spoke of purity, or cleanness, *in the* τῇ καρδίᾳ. heart, He obviously intended to reflect on that ceremonial or formal cleansing of the body by appointed sprinklings and washings, in which stood a great part of the customary religion.<sup>1</sup> He meant, therefore, to begin with personal moral cleanness, as opposed to what was merely legal or conventional. Further, His phrase points to a life of which the inward motives sincerely answered the external profession, as opposed to the fictitious holiness of Pharisees. He could mean no mere 'making clean of the outside of the cup,' while 'ravening and wickedness,' 'ex-tortion and excess,' made the inside foul. Sincerity, in the sense of moral wholeness or integrity, as opposed to a false or double character which looks one thing and is another, is the first

Cf. Matt.  
xxiii. 25, with  
Luke xi. 39.

<sup>1</sup> The verb *καθαρίζω* is often used in the Gospels and Acts and in Hebrews for the legal cleansings. See Bruder, *s.v.*

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element in such clean-heartedness as He calls blessed. No heart, that is to say, is clean, which is not penetrated to its core by that love of goodness, that passion for virtue, which Jesus had already beatified two sentences before. 'Blessed,' He had said, 'are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness.' He now adds, in effect, that this longing after righteousness must have penetrated to the centre of the inner life, to the springs of action in motive and affection, so that the man is not content unless he be as right within as he seems without, as right in secret thought or wish as in apparent act, before Jesus will crown him with this later blessedness, or call him 'pure in heart.'

Further, the soul must not only have learned to desire, but have also come to possess, such inward rightness, before it can inherit this sixth beatitude. It is from an honest love of utter inward purity that all real progress springs, and that is blessed; but some progress must have been made, ere you can congratulate the heart on being in fact a 'pure' or purified heart. Now, in the actual effort to make and to keep one's heart clean in motive, there will always arise, first of all, a reaction against experienced uncleanness. So soon as the state of one's own heart becomes

a study, and the keeping of it clean an object, its perpetual liability to defilement is discovered. SIXTH  
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‘Every sin,’ as Origen said, ‘sets a blot upon the soul;’ and the soul which is bent on being clean is conscious of the blot, and reacts against it. Hom. 73, in  
Joannem,  
quoted by  
Tholuck in  
loc.

It reacts in repentance for the unclean state of heart, in confession to the Cleanser, and in a fresh petition for mercy to pardon. Now, it will be remarked, that this continual sensitiveness to freshly contracted guilt, with an incessant re-application to the mercy of Heaven, is precisely the attitude of soul contemplated in the preceding fifth beatitude. Men of a merciful or placable Ver. 7. and gracious temper were pronounced blessed for this reason, that they are for ever receiving, what they are for ever in need of, new acts of the divine mercy. So far, therefore, the effort of the heart which would be pure lies in the line of spiritual development followed in earlier beatitudes; so far, too, it hardly gets beyond them. It is not much beyond a painful discovery of uncleanness. It is a longing, and something more; it is still scarcely an attaining.

There is, however, an attaining possible. The heart which sets out with a hunger after righteousness; which finds that, to be worth having, righteousness must be from the heart outwards;

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which strives against inward defilement, and, under such a sense of sin as makes it a gentle censor of other men, carries each fresh stain to the blood of sprinkling at the mercy-seat: that heart does by effort and degrees attain to purity. As soon as it attains, it comes within the region of a new blessedness; in measure as it attains, it advances in that blessedness. It begins to see, and more and more it sees, God.

It appears, then, that purity of heart is in some measure attained, whenever any impure motive or affection is really displaced and cast out. There is one class of desires, called 'fleshly,' which St. Peter tells us are conspicuous for this, 1 Pet. ii. 11. that they 'war against the soul.' The sensual appetites, when unlawfully indulged, have this bad pre-eminence among sins, that they stain the purity of the heart and put out its spiritual eyes faster and more surely than any other forbidden thing. Against these, therefore—against lewdness, against gluttony, against all gross and intemperate pleasures—the soul must wage her warfare first until she have subdued them; even beating the body down, if need be, before the heart can be called pure enough for any vision of the Pure One. But, indeed, all unregulated passion has a disturbing and discomposing action.

Cf. 1 Cor. ix.  
27.

Peevishness, hot temper, envy, malign displeasure, excessive pursuit of gain, the puffed-up vanity of possession, and ambition, are all so many evil breaths blown into the heart, to dim the tender purity of its motives, divide the singleness of its aim, and obscure its vision of divine and heavenly things. The heart cannot be pure if, in its loyalty to the will of God, there mix some interested purpose of its own, or some secret homage to another lord, or some restless wish to have the will of God other than it is. It is fatal to the simplicity, and therefore to the purity, of the soul to be seriously divided betwixt two desires, one righteous and one wrong. It matters little what the object is which splits the secret wholeness of the heart with God, or diverts allegiance from His will; the mere fact of a divided allegiance stains the pureness of the moral nature. Subordination of baser to nobler desires; the bridling of lust by conscience; the supplanting of selfish interests by love; coincidence of one's aims in life with the divine will; concentration of all effort on what is really best; and devout submission of choice into the hand of God: these all are parts of that perfect cleanness and wholeness and unmingledness of heart which our Lord calls its 'purity.'

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*Hoc est mundum cor quod est simplex cor.—Aug.*

After such a purging of the inner life, no

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doubt, every Christian man to some extent must be supposed to struggle. But once more let it be noticed, that it is not the struggle which is here blessed, but the condition of heart struggled after. So long as the heart is an arena of contending desires, in which every sort of earthly and most undivine passion is asserting itself and clamouring for its gratification, in flat defiance of duty and right; in which the utmost the will can do is in some degree to curb the ebullitions of a chafing temper or avoid the gross indulgence of animal appetite: so long as the man is thus torn hither and thither, and his inward life is a mere battle-piece, he is not 'pure in heart.' Even victory won on the righteous side after such a contest, and in face of baffled but still armed adversaries, is hardly a qualification for the beatitude of the pure. The Christian must have fought out the fight in great part, and pacified the restless soul within him. He must have brought out from the strife a heart swayed into repose like a sea after storm, or disciplined into orderly obedience like an army which is no longer mutinous. He must have made his life, of a chaos, a kosmos; the turbid must have grown clear, and the divided single. Then, with the affections turned towards good only, and the will

sweetly moved to follow God's, and the old bad likings and gross thoughts cast forth, and the conscience kept 'void of offence,' and all the soul in tune with love and heaven; then will he be indeed most blessed, for he will be 'pure in heart.' This is the beatitude of them that have overcome; overcome, that is, not yet in the outward conflict with the sin of the world, seeking to make peace on earth, and being persecuted for it—for that is a beatitude still to come; but it is the beatitude of those who in the first and sorest strife, the strife within, have overcome the lawlessness of their own bad selves, and, by expulsion or subjugation, have really set up within their own hearts the kingdom of God.

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Acts xxiv. 16.

See vers. 9,  
10.

It is seldom enough, indeed, that one sees such a blessedness attained in earthly saints. With most, it is enough to speak of the desire, or of the effort, or of the strife after this rare purity. In the best of earth-bound men it must be only partial. Yet did we never chance to know a bright and placid Christian of experience, who had been so schooled into holiness, that his eye, as open as a child's, told of a spirit within transparent in purpose as a hillside spring; of a conscience unstained, not only by conscious disloyalty, but even by resisted evil; of a secret



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fancy clean from a foul image; of a character in which every turbid or uneasy passion had settled to the bottom, and left the clear deep heart to mirror only in its bosom all day long the light from the face of God? To a soul, if any such soul there be, thus placid in its triumph over the foul and the unruly, God gives, as the reward of triumphant virtue, the vision of His own glory. Or must we take flight from earth, and enter in our fancy within the new and holy City, to find hearts that are pure and eyes that see eternal purity? Be it so: yet must we also press through our battle into such cleanness and wholeness of heart. Have we a hope that 'when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is'? Then must 'every man that hath this hope in Him purify himself, even as He is pure.' For in at the gates of that City—so

Rev. xxi. 27. unlike the cities of this world—'there shall in no wise enter anything that defileth.' That City's streets are of gold that is pure; the river which

Rev. xxi. 18 waters it is a pure river; and the fine linen in and 21, which its sainted citizens do walk is clean and xxii. 1, xix. white. Even the elder Church could answer its 8, 14. own question,

1 John iii.  
2, 3.

'Who shall ascend into the Hill of the Lord?  
Or who shall stand in His Holy Place?'

by saying,

‘He that hath clean hands and a pure heart.’

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BEATITUDE.

Ps. xxiv. 3, 4.

Sin-stained and evil-hearted men as we are, it is here, and now, that this purification must be wrought. What need have we to have oftèn upon our lips the prayer,

‘O God, make clean our hearts within us!’

Morning  
Service.

Yet let us not be dismayed. Some little purity of heart he must have begun to possess, who ever looked at all into the face of Jesus Christ as the image of His Father’s grace and truth. Now, therefore, let us continue to gaze on *Him*, with whatever openness of eye we have to see His glory; for it is the pure-heartedness of Jesus which maketh the disciple’s heart pure; and we all, if ‘with open face’ we do but ‘behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord,’ shall be ‘changed 2 Cor. iii. 18. into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.’ So may God change us like the pure-hearted Son, and bring us one day where with all His servants we shall ‘see Rev. xxii. 4. His face’ in the endless beatific vision of the Celestial City!



**THE SEVENTH BEATITUDE.**

*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God* [rather, 'shall be called sons of God'].—  
**MATT. V. 9.**

## THE SEVENTH BEATITUDE.

**L**IKE a dove bearing the olive, came that famous hymn of angels on the birth-night heralding peace on earth. For the present, however, such peace as the gospel of Jesus Christ has wrought cannot be said to be peace betwixt man and man. It was 'a sword' rather which the King saw He had come to send ; division in families ; variance on the deepest questions ; the superseding of natural ties by a stronger spiritual love, and the consequent awakening of unnatural hostilities. The olive-branch which the Babe brought was a branch from heaven, and betokened the restoration of ruptured amity between man and God. It was the reconciliation, first, of humanity to the Father, which the Son adventured Himself on earth to achieve, and it is a message of pacification with Heaven which His ambassadors bear. That first, that now, whatever strife such a message may breed in human households ; for not till God's alien-

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BEATITUDE.

Luke ii. 14.

Matt. x. 34-36, where  
Mic. vii. 6 is  
quoted.

SEVENTH BEATITUDE. —  
 Ps. cxxxiii. 1. ated children are become His reconciled children, can it be hoped that estranged and striving brethren will learn to dwell together in family unity.

Tennyson. While it is true, therefore, that the advent of the Christ was the herald of a general pacification among men, of a golden day, prophesied of old by hopeful hearts, when all the world shall shake hands over its ancient enmities, and universal brotherhood displace universal selfishness; the advent only heralded that as a 'far-off divine event,' to which it was itself the preamble or needful antecedent. All dispeace on earth is the fruit of each man having, in selfish wilfulness, broken the blessed cord of love which ought to have kept him in his loyalty and obedience as a son to the Highest Father. That tie of sonship broken, this of brotherhood is broken too. We have lost filial love; fraternal love we cannot keep. Nor, till each of us has singly and alone returned to his Father's knee, embraced the paternal forgiveness, and been restored to his duty in the Father's house, can we patch up among ourselves anything better than a make-believe word-truce, a sham 'fraternity' that rests on a false 'equality.'

He, therefore, Who came from the Father

heralded as a Peacemaker by celestial voices, <sup>SEVENTH</sup> disclosed this to be a supreme characteristic of <sup>BEATITUDE,</sup> the Godhead, that God loves peace ; and, though displeased and wronged, still loves peace so well, that He will pursue it and make for it at any cost, save at the cost of honour, justice, and truth. The sacrifice which God made when He sacrificed His Son was made in the interests of peace, for the thorough and final restoration of confident affection between Himself and His disobedient family. The old relation on which man stood with God had been a happy one for both ; happy so long as it was a relation of mutual trust and love : on our side, of willing dependence and cheerful service ; on His, of complacent and delighted bounty. The rupture came from man's first disobedience. Disobedience led to alienation ; alienation meant first suspicion, then rebellion, then dislike, and last defiance ; till man is found fronting his Maker with the light of malignity in his eye, and on his tongue impious words of blasphemy. It is from the grieved heart of the injured One above, from His yearning, longing heart to Whom all strife is hateful for it is the child of hate, and all righteous peace most dear for it is the fruit of love, that the peace-making Mediator came. God sent Him : God



SEVENTH BEATITUDE. was in Him : God made peace through the blood of His cross : God by Him reconciled the world, 2 Cor. v. 19; Col. i. 20.<sup>1</sup> nay, all things, unto Himself. This is the very gospel, that God has taken on Himself this character of 'peacemaker' by finding and sending in His Son a Mediator; and that through the atonement of the sacrificed Son 'made sin for us' the just terms of pacification are met, and, so far as on the divine side reconciliation is possible, men are reconciled to God. Christ is not only Eph. ii. 14. our Peacemaker; He is, in St. Paul's words, 'our peace:' for peace with God stands in the meritorious passion and service of His person Who is the mediating Man. The restoration of each soul to divine friendship turns now on nothing else or more than that soul's willingness to be restored. Whatever else needed to be done has been done. The turning and yielding of the unfriendly heart to be at friends again with our injured God is that on which God waits, and to which He urges us. For what is the message of reconciliation but this: 'That God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them'? And what remains for the 'ambassadors for Christ' to do, but, 'as

2 Cor. v. 18-20.

<sup>1</sup> In this latter passage the verb *ἀποκαταλλάσσειν* seems to be used of God the Father Himself; see Bähr and Meyer *in loc.*

though God did beseech men,' to 'pray them in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God' ?

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The writings of St. Paul show that this aspect of the gospel, as the restoration of men to peace with God, was a favourite one with him and in the primitive churches which he founded. Seven times over is God called with emphasis 'the God of peace';<sup>1</sup> constantly in apostolic benedictions and salutations is 'peace' invoked from the Blessed Trinity as one of the first trinity of Christian blessings;<sup>2</sup> the gospel itself was but a proclamation of peace;<sup>3</sup> and when reduced to a dogma, the kernel of apostolic teaching reappeared in these exact technical terms: 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.' Rom. v. 1.

Under these circumstances, it was natural that the early churches, especially the Gentile churches, should lay stress on the maintenance of both spiritual and social peace. At a moment in the history of heathenism, when, beyond all parallel before or since, men's faith was under-

<sup>1</sup> In Rom. xv. 33, xvi. 20; 2 Cor. xiii. 11; Phil. iv. 9; 1 Thess. v. 23; and ('Lord of peace') 2 Thess. iii. 16; besides in Heb. xiii. 20.

<sup>2</sup> With 'grace' and 'mercy.' See Epp. *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. 'gospel of peace,' in Rom. x. 15 and Eph. vi. 15; 'preaching peace,' in Acts x. 36 and Eph. ii. 17.

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mined, and the consciences of the earnest distracted, by the pretensions of rival priesthoods, when all the polytheistic systems of East and West clashed together in the great cities of Greco-Roman civilisation, and devout souls in search for pardon or rest rushed from the secret mysteries of one new religion to the more secret mysteries of another; at such a moment the first Christians had been called to a true spiritual rest for their guilt-laden consciences in the atoning blood of God's dear Son. It was not wonderful that each convert treasured the assurance of this peace of God which 'passed all understanding' as well as all former experience, and sought to give it the regulative place in his heart as the composer of every inward disquietude.<sup>1</sup> Such profound repose of spirit in the reconciling love of Jesus' Father, as Jesus had Himself bequeathed to His disciples to be their abiding refuge under the tribulations of the world, was at once the rarest and the most precious thing which the new faith had to offer. By a necessity of life, out from this interior soul-state of restful peace with God came the desire to 'be at peace among themselves.' Each little community of saints,

Phil. iv. 7.    peace of God which 'passed all understanding'  
as well as all former experience, and sought to  
Col. iii. 15.    give it the regulative place in his heart as the  
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new faith had to offer. By a necessity of life,  
out from this interior soul-state of restful peace  
with God came the desire to 'be at peace among  
1 Thess. v. 13. themselves.' Each little community of saints,

Cf. John xiv.  
27 with xvi.  
33.

<sup>1</sup> Such is the force of *ῥαβδύω* in Col. iii. 15. The true reading here is, 'peace of *Christ*.'

called out of darkness, constituted a chosen brotherhood; and it seemed indispensable to that serene atmosphere of spiritual joy and rest in which their inner life moved, that no unbrotherly contention should shake their outward fellowship. Outside the charmed circle of the Church lay the struggling mass of heathen society, full of passions under no control, and strifes for which no peacemaker could be found; a society fretted by political injustice, restless through the mingling of many races, inheriting the results of selfish and criminal indulgence, where the poor were steeped in misery, and the rich were brutalized by sensuality; a society which was fast disintegrating through vice into a chaos of warring elements. This lay outside. Here, then, within the blessed Church of Christ's elect brethren, let there be peace. Over and over again in the apostolic letters does this craving for domestic harmony in the Church appear. To peace they were 'called.' It was the 'link' that kept them together.<sup>1</sup> The salutation which sealed their fraternity was a kiss of peace.<sup>2</sup> It was better

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1 Cor. vii. 15.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Eph. iv. 3, 'Unity in the bond of peace;' or perhaps love is the *σύνδεσμος* by which peace is to be kept, as Bengel, 'Vinculum quo pax retinetur est ipse amor.'

<sup>2</sup> See 1 Cor. xvi. 20; 1 Pet. v. 14; 2 Thess. v. 26; Rom. xvi. 16.

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1 Cor. vi. 1-8.

Phil. iv. 2.

Rom. xii. 18.

to suffer wrong than to litigate with a brother. Wherever, as in the Church at Corinth or at Rome, internal harmony was split by factions, the whole weight of apostolic authority was put forth with censure and with entreaties to restore peace. Even where, as at Philippi, a couple of members had quarrelled, an apostle thought it worth while to beg them by name to be 'of the same mind in the Lord.' Everywhere this was felt to be the condition of comfort, of edification, and of unity, that each Christian should, by self-control, by gentleness, by respect for others, by Christ-like forbearance, 'follow after the things which make for peace'<sup>1</sup> within the brotherhood; and if it were possible, as far as that might depend on him, should live peaceably even with all men.

Thus it was that, within the earliest groups of His reconciled brethren, the pacification wrought by the Lord Jesus betwixt earth and heaven began to bring also peace on earth. On all Christians who, then or now, have sought to preserve the unity of the body in the bond of peace, there surely came and comes a beatitude from the Master. Blessed are such peacekeepers in the kingdom of God.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Rom. xiv. 19; Eph. iv. 1-16; Col. iii. 12-15; Phil. ii. 1-5; Gal. v. 26-vi. 2; Jas. iii. 10-18.

The Beatitude we are considering, however, <sup>SEVENTH</sup> stretches out beyond this point. It is not they <sup>BEATITUDE.</sup>  
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who keep, but they who make, peace, whom it crowns with benediction. This third characteristic Christian grace of peacemaking assumes that the soul has attained to that inward rest of spirit which (as was said under the last Beatitude) is an outcome from the purification of the heart. Not only is the heart at peace with God through the blood of Christ; it is at peace with itself through inward overcoming and the working out of it of every unruly, or immoderate, or self-seeking passion. The pure heart is a placid heart. It has within itself the rule of love. It rests, and is not easily moved from its rest. It sees God. In such a heart there cannot but be a desire that love should rule in other hearts too, and that everywhere around it evil passions should be laid, and the sweet will of God kissed, and the souls of men composed to such orderly obedience and fraternal concord as become the sons of God. The pure heart being full, like God, of the calm of just and holy charity towards all, will, like God, send forth around it a calming influence on the uncharitable and the unjust. The peace it has attained in itself, it will strive to realize in others. Having moderated its own passions, it

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will breathe restraint on violence and lust. Having conquered its own anger, it will teach gentleness to the angry. Having learned to surrender its own choice with little effort, it will not be able to sit still when the grasping contend over petty gains, and the self-willed sulk under adverse providence. The sight of dispeace grows unendurably mournful to those whose own peace has been won by victory over self; for they know, as none can know save by experience, what is the wretchedness of an unsubdued and unpacified heart; what the blessedness of a heart that is pure. Thus there grows up within the pure-hearted children of the Highest a pain for the souls that strive and are not at rest; a heart-soreness at sight of men who are at war with one another, at war within themselves, and at war with the will of God; which, in its degree, is like to the heart-soreness of the compassionate Father when He sent forth His Son. It is not enough for them now, when that fire burns, to sit still and enjoy the peace of God, or strive to be, as far as in them lies, at peace with all men. That is good, but it is not enough. To give no offence, and where possible take none; to stand clear of strife; to look on when hearts are torn and lives are spent in a mad contention with the

laws of God ; to let human nature fret itself to death, out of peace, hateful and hating, rebellious and proud : this is not to be like the Eternal Father. Had He done so of old, the Son had kept His pure and peaceful heaven ; no angels had sung peace on earth at His birth ; no sweet message, like an olive leaf, had grown out of His cross. Pacification at His own cost and pain is the supreme idea of our Christian God : His name is Reconciler. They who have been born of Him, and are so like Him that they can see Him, are in this world as He was in it—the world's reconcilers.

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Cf. 1 John  
iv. 7-14.

There are many means by which the pure heart, grieved by dispeace, will strive to heal again the world's sorely-broken peace. First comes, of course, the effort, by forward offers of conciliation and by meekness in forgiving, to win those who are our own adversaries. Whether it is that a brother has offended him, or been offended by him, the Christian cannot sit contentedly under the rupture of love. A state of alienation is too painful to be borne when it can be mended. If, without loss of true honour, or practical injustice, or any other greater evil following, the offender can be won to penitence or the offended to pardon by any humbling on our part or by personal loss and pain, the pure heart will be pressed out of



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itself to win its brother, as God in Christ has won us all.

There is next the Christ-like office of mediator to be undertaken. As betwixt God and us the Christ stepped in, and by declaration of our Father's heart to us and bearing of our sins to the Father, wrought effectual restoration of peace, so is it a very blessed office of Christian charity to bring back to mutual love those who are at strife. Most justly is such an exercise of the divine love in man put far on in our Lord's catalogue of His kingdom's graces. No task is more delicate, or asks for its discharge a cleaner heart. To undertake the mediation with no motive but the purest charity; to be of such approved character as to win the confidence of both parties; to be of justice so balanced as to lean unduly to neither; to have adequate sympathy and insight to understand the case of each and nowise sacrifice honour to peace; to be of patience enough, and gentleness enough, and self-denial enough, to persevere against rebuffs and make allowance for scruples and unreasonable temper; finally, to have a flame of divine generosity within us, hot enough to fuse opposed hearts in that solvent of charity without which a formal reconciliation is nothing worth: all this

supposes in the mediator such an assemblage and ripeness of graces as few hearts indeed are pure enough to possess. SEVENTH  
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There are humbler ways in which any of us may help to mitigate the contentions of men. With moderate tact and patience, one may often calm the ruffled temper of an incensed friend, or persuade him to more moderate counsels; may hinder a misunderstanding from growing to a quarrel; may quench those words of fire which, too ready on the tongue, kindle much strife; may shame, or coax, or jest away the dark mood from a brother's brow. Nothing more effectually exorcises the evil spirits of strife, or pours oil on tumultuous passionate hearts, than the gentle presence of a pure and spiritual character. Such sweet and holy influence breathes around a saint, a true-hearted Christian woman, or a guileless child, that from their very presence malign tempers flee, and at their feet, like Una in our great English poem,<sup>1</sup> fawns the lion like a lamb. The

*Cf. Jas. iii.  
5, 6.*

<sup>1</sup> 'It fortun'd, out of the thickest wood  
A ramping lyon rushed suddenly,  
Hunting full greedy after salvage blood.  
Soon as the royall virgin he did spy,  
With gaping mouth at her ran greedily  
To have attonce devoured her tender corse;  
But to the pray when as he drew more nigh,

SEVENTH BEATITUDE. peaceful pure are thus involuntary peacemakers ; and of such is the kingdom of God.

By far the noblest effort at pacification, however, remains behind. It is to be an ambassador between the Father above and the brother beside  
 1 Tim. ii. 5. us. There is indeed but 'one Mediator,' Who is  
 2 Cor. v. 20. our peace ; but there are many messengers of His reconciliation. The angels who sang this peace in the air were not suffered to negotiate it. Nor did He Who founded it in His blood grudge to His humble brothers a share in the actual work of bringing men to be reconciled to God. It is a privilege in which the humblest saint may share. To all of us, in some shape and to some extent, it is given to be, what St. Paul calls himself, 'fellow-workers,' 'labourers together with God.'  
 2 Cor. vi. 1, 1 Cor. iii. 9. This is to be peacemakers indeed. To have a hand, however slight, in composing the dreadful controversy concerning guilt, which by nature divides every man from his Maker ; to be bearers of Heaven's sweet and generous offer of pardon ;

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His bloody rage aswaged with remorse,  
 And with the sight amaz'd forgot his furious force.

'Instead thereof, he kist her wearie feet,  
 And licked her lilly hand with fawning tongue,  
 As he her wronged innocence did weet.'

—FAERIE QUEENE, III. 5, 6.

to persuade a brother to hear and heed his Saviour's voice 'preaching peace;' to lift some earthly hindrance of care or prejudice out of his way who is half-minded to return to his Father; to win a less sullen ear for God, and get His misguided child to look less doubtfully on the message and less coldly on Him Who sends it: what honour is there here within reach of all! Mother, with your child alone in the closet; brother, whose boy brother, heedless of others, will mind at least what you say; young man, sitting at one desk, sharing one room with an unchristian comrade; maiden, with six little ones to teach in the Sunday class; visitor, to whom the sick eyes turn gladly when you enter the dim and shabby room; and not these only, but busy men in mercantile and professional life, to whom other busy men will hearken because you are of them, and before whom, if you have speech in you at all, so many avenues now stand open for bearing Christian testimony through pen or tongue: this noblest office of peacemaker invites us all. It is true that to do this well, it must be the doing not only of a pacified, but also of a pure heart. To be oneself at peace with God is needful. To have zeal for the reconciliation of others is also much. Compassion, and

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Acts x. 36.

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some sense of what men lose who reject the Redeemer's offices as their Mediator with the Father, will prompt us to carry olive branches and press divine mercy on our fellows. But to do this as it ought to be done, with a tenderness, simplicity, humbleness, and patience like the great Peacemaker's own, will tax the virtue of the purest heart which most clearly sees the face of God. Yet no one need postpone all attempts at doing it till he can say his heart is pure. If perfect purity were prerequisite, angels, and not men, should have been the heralds of this reconciling. Let those who know the peace of God for themselves begin to be heralds, and do it as they can. Let them try to do it with as pure a heart as possible. The work is so divine, that it will lift the doers of it a little nearer to its own level. Each effort to make peace with something of the sweet, meek charity of that white-robed Mediator Whose messenger he is, will drive the Christian to seek the purification of his own heart and the increase within himself of love and peace. To be in any case successful, to see the broken tie between any soul and God re-knit, and the blest Dove from heaven descend to brood within a brother's heart, is to be eternally and unspeakably overpaid.

The characteristic Beatitude which rewards such actual mediators of goodwill between men and God is not to be, but to be called, God's sons. Not to *be* sons ; for already from the first, when the sinner entered the kingdom's strait gate through his poverty of spirit and had his mourning for sin comforted, he has been a child of God. The new birth, which makes us sons, stood at the opening of these Beatitudes, and has not to be reached only here at their close. But to be *called* what they are ; to be manifestly declared, like their Lord, to be sons of God with power ; to have sonship verified through likeness, as when children grown to age reproduce the parental characteristics, and tread anew in the father's footprints. If the Eternal has set upon our earth any footmarks which are not to be mistaken because they betray the indubitably divine, these are to be found in His work of reconciliation, in His mission of a Mediator, His embassy of ultraneous mercy, His urgency that men would come into grace while the day of salvation runs, and His royal attitude of waiting for the prodigal's return with arms that are stretched to bless. If, therefore, His people are not only to be, but to be declared, His sons, it is not enough to hide in secret a pure heart, or dwell in the blessed

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Cf. Rom. i. 3.

2 Cor. vi. 1, 2.

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vision of His face. Forth into the evil, hostile world they too must step, as stepped forth the proper Son of His love. Into the Son's task they too must enter. Cloistered purity may be like God ; active peacemakers and reconcilers of mankind act like God. They manifest their likeness ; for in the divinest steps of their Father they tread ; His most godlike deeds they do. If, as is most likely, their peacemaking awaken hostility ; if, coming like Jesus to preach peace to earth, they seem at first to send only a sword ; if men hate them as they hated the Master, and take up stones to cast at the heralds of mercy : this too will but manifest afresh their Godlikeness, and introduce them to a further and final blessedness. The reconciliation to God of men who hate God because they have reason to fear Him, must bring on the reconciler a share of hatred. With pains, and loss, and toil, and cost to person and to feelings must such peacemakers be content to make peace, even as war-makers make war. In the strifes of men, he who adventures himself betwixt the combatants to pacify them risks a blow from both. If, betwixt the men who hate their God, and God who loves all men, any one will be bold enough to interfere, as a bearer of His terms of peace and a pleader for His rights, blows he

John xv. 18.

John viii. 59;  
cf. Acts xiv.  
19.

Matt. v. 10.

may count on meeting with, hard words and evil deeds ; but all of them from one side only in this strange and monstrous controversy. From the other side, His side Whose work of peacemaking he desires to aid, he will receive inward commendation now, a spirit-peace no blow can break, a sense of fellowship with His dear Son which heals all sores ; and at the last, and in the end, the public exhibition and declaration of his approved sonship, when, all struggle being over, the hosts of the pacified and of the peacemakers shall ride together in white behind their King, not forth to vengeance,<sup>1</sup> but home to triumph : and they who at the gates of Bethlehem of old sang peace on earth shall trumpet at the gates of heaven—

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‘ Blessed are the peacemakers !  
For they are called “ sons of God.” ’

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<sup>1</sup> As in the vision of St. John, Rev. xix. 11 ff.



*Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.—MATT. V. 10–12.*

*Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy; for, behold, your reward is great in heaven; for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets. . . . Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.—LUKE VI. 22, 23, 26.*

## THE EIGHTH BEATITUDE.

**P**EOPLE sometimes speak as if there were no more than seven beatitudes. The reason EIGHTH  
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why this eighth one is apt to be thus overlooked is, that it stands apart from all the rest, forming a class by itself, rather than, what some call it, a mere appendix or supplement. The seven are all beatitudes of character; the eighth is the beatitude of condition. The seven describe the inward and moral qualities of a true disciple or subject of the Divine King; the eighth defines his external position in relation to this world. The seven are blessed attainments of the spiritual life, which the Christian bears with him substantially into his hereafter, however in their exercise they may be hereafter modified; the eighth is an unfortunate result of the circumstances which surround a Christian so long as he lives here, but is to be exchanged hereafter for a contrasted state of felicity and reward.

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At this point, therefore, we may look back over the seven beatitudes which lie behind us, and find in them the development of Christian character from its root to its fruit. We have seen that the first group of three defines the negative, and the second group of four the positive, side of Christian experience. Betwixt the first three, in which the self-righteous sinner is stripped, emptied, and reduced, and the last three, in which the believer attains to the manifest likeness of a son of God, we have found the middle term to be the blessedness of desire. We have seen the descending humiliation which arises from realized sin, described to us in the *first*, by the poverty of a convicted debtor; in the *second*, by the mourning of a godly penitent; and in the *third*, by the meekness of a conscious pensioner on sovereign bounty. By a recoil from this humiliation, we heard the soul cry out in its inappeasable appetite after real goodness, longing in the *fourth* to attain to the virtues which it has not. Step by step we have also traced the growth of attainment. The forgiven forgives in the *fifth*; in the *sixth*, the soul, cleansed of guilt, cleanses itself through grace from sin; and the reconciled and happy son, won back to the sight of a Father's face, cannot but travail, in the *seventh*, to win

back his brothers also, and lead them to the same paternal bosom. The filial likeness is thus complete, and the long and seven times blessed process finds its natural close.

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Is all, then, over? Within, indeed, all is over; and if the soul were where the seven golden promises of the King shall be fulfilled, it might be left there to its everlasting blessedness among the hosts of the reconciled children of the kingdom, who, comforted now and filled, inherit the earth, inhabit heaven, and behold God. But these first disciples, after the seven blessings had dropped on their heads like the oil of God, stood just where they had stood before. Grouped round their lowly Lord, with a curious but not trustworthy crowd attending them, and watched by hostile plotters, it was impossible for them, even, much more for Him, to forget that their new position as His apostles was one of peril. He did not propose to take them out of the world, either to a cœnobitic home in the Syrian desert or to a paradise in any far-off heaven. He meant them to be like a salt to preserve Jewish society, and a light to illumine heathen darkness. But He knew what that meant. He remembered what had been from the first the fate of men who attained a more than common likeness to God, or

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sought to lead other men by the light of God. Israel's national history was one long record of holy teachers, who, for their faithful rebukes of vice, had one by one dashed away noble lives in what seemed unavailing contest with strong ungodliness and the evil passions both of the great few and of the many mean. Rulers and populace had often been for a time at feud; but in the end the interests of the throne and of the people had always coalesced, and always that coalition had been fatal to the prophets. Jesus knew that this tragedy, so often written in blood on the pages of His country's history, was once more to be written larger than ever in His own blood. As He stood that morning on the hill, and called these twelve to confess and to follow Him, He well knew that He was calling them to be confessors by suffering and followers unto death. It hardly needed prescience like His to forecast the future of any men who should undertake to show the world a real living kingdom of God on earth, and to persuade the world to live at peace with God. To be misunderstood, to be abused, to be bid hold their peace for fanatics or madmen, were the lightest forms of resistance to be looked for. Resistance might become animosity, and words turn to blows, and the attempt to silence become

an attempt to extirpate or to crush. In such a world as this is, such men as Jesus designed to make His scholars could find no paradise; they could find only persecution.

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Here, then, was material for an anti-climax! After so many blessednesses, piled one on another's top in sublime profusion, here was a state to be faced which looked anything but blessed! A teacher less spiritual or penetrating than our Master, might have been tempted to treat the inevitable hostility of the wicked as simply a set-off or drawback to the blessedness of discipleship; a drawback only to be balanced by some corresponding recompense in the world to come. To Jesus, this idea of compensation hereafter was not a foreign one. Deep in the whole system of His teaching,<sup>1</sup> as it had lain deep in the theology of His fathers under the Old Testament, there lay the thought that loss or pain cheerfully borne here for sake of God's truth and honour by His witnesses, shall find in the end some meet acknowledgment at the hands of the Righteous King. To serve God and suffer for Him never seemed to

<sup>1</sup> The word *μισθός*, 'reward,' is used in Matt. v. 46, vi. 1 (cf. Luke vi. 35), x. 41, by our Lord; as well as in 1 Cor. iii. 14, 2 John 8, Rev. xxii. 12. The idea is also found in Matt. xxv. *pass.*, as well as in Heb. vi. 10.

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the prophets a final loss. What else has upheld the spirit of all good men and true, when called to throw this life and its delights away for conscience' sake, but the firm persuasion that under a government of equity (not to speak of grace) such noble loss must mean eternal gain? That God is not unrighteous to forget the work and toil of love which His servants show unto His name, is Christian teaching; but it is far earlier than Christian teaching. It is the voice of the human conscience testifying for the divine character. The characteristic Christian 'doctrine of grace,' as it is termed, that life eternal is no wage won by human merit, but a gratuitous gift of God's mercy, does certainly exclude from the Christian sphere all thought of such reward as rests on absolute merit or a claim of right; but it does not in the least exclude that equitable and gracious recompense, proportioned to service done and suffering borne, which every one feels to be the fitting crown of the faithful and the brave. That must be a very unbiblical and extravagant Protestantism which grudges the martyr his palm, or would filch from the dying apostle the crown which a righteous Judge had laid up for him at the end of his career. We serve a generous Master. He meets His approved ones with

Heb. vi. 10.

Rom. vi. 23.

See also  
Luke xvii.  
10; Rom.  
iv. 4.

Rev. vii. 9.

2 Tim. iv. 8.

hearty words: 'Well done, good and faithful!' But He rewards their service after its degree with something beyond words: 'Thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things.'

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**Matt. xxv.  
21; cf. Luke  
xix. 17.**

Jesus, therefore, was not afraid to speak to His followers of reward; nor did He disdain to inspire and fortify them by the prospect of thrones in heaven, and a recompense of an hundredfold for all they might lose on earth. How could He, since He, Who was too truly man to be above any natural human feeling, endured His own cross for the joy that was set before Him? I find it most natural and exquisite, that in the words directly addressed to the new-made apostles, Jesus should bid them 'rejoice' when men reviled them for His sake, because just so great should be their reward in heaven.' Consider why these words were added to this last Beatitude, and the wisdom of such a promise will appear. The blessedness of being persecuted was a saying too paradoxical, and too unexpected to the first hearers of it, not to startle or alarm them. It was quite enough against Jewish preoccupations to tell them, as He had been doing, that the subjects of Messiah's kingdom were not to be all born Jews, but only men of a rare and

**Matt. xix.  
28, 29; Luke  
xxii. 30.**

**Heb. xii. 2.**

**Matt. v. 11,  
12.**



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humble moral type. To tell them now that His subjects were not to find honour or power on earth, but ridicule and hostility, was worse; it was not only against their preoccupations as Hebrews, it was against their likings as men. It was one of the hardest of hard sayings; and to call such persecution a blessed thing, for which they were to be, not condoled with, but congratulated, might well sound in the ears of these raw followers like adding a mock to a blow. For their special heartening, therefore, that they might the better understand what was before them, yet might be encouraged to face an earthly future so unlike what they anticipated; Jesus sacrificed the formal symmetry of His address, to repeat in ampler and more personal terms His eighth and most difficult beatitude. With this closing word of the series, He does what He had not done with any earlier one. He translates the general benediction of a class, 'Blessed are they who —,' into a direct address to individuals, 'Blessed are ye when —.' He breaks down the generic term 'persecute' into its three species: (1)

Cf. 1 Pet. iv.  
14.

verbal abuse or reviling; (2) persecution, in the narrower sense, by abusive actions, whether through popular rage or public prosecution; and

Cf. Tit. ii. 8. (3) the false imputation of crime and of un-

worthy motives.<sup>1</sup> Further, as the ground for their anticipating such persecution, He boldly substitutes, in place of the abstract conception hitherto employed of 'the kingdom of heaven,' no other than Himself. 'For My sake,' said He; words admirably fitted to awake within their bosoms all that charm of private attachment and personal obligation to their Master, on which at this stage their fidelity to His cause mainly depended. If any offence lay in His calling persecution a 'blessed' thing, He has the courage to amplify and emphasize that blessedness; for over what seemed so hard a lot He bids them actually 'rejoice and exult,' using the strongest and most exuberant terms, as if He would infuse into their failing coward hearts some of His own noble ardour in sight of danger, and by words of flame suggest how magnificent was the compensation which He saw, though they could not, lying beyond this mortal verge in the near land of celestial glory which was His home. Finally, what He promised them as an inducement to follow Him through shame and wrong, was not

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χαίρειτε καὶ  
ἐγαλλίσησθε.

<sup>1</sup> A subdivision afterwards borrowed word for word by St. Paul (who, both as persecutor and as persecuted, could appreciate its accuracy), when he wrote: 'Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat' (1 Cor. iv. 12).

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Cf. Luke xvi.  
23.

the highest or most spiritual element in the blessedness of the persecuted; but it was something which their minds could better comprehend and their faith better grasp: a reward definite, tangible, and real; such a reward as the popular theology of that day set before itself as the recompense of the blessed prophets, those sainted and martyred heroes of the old Hebrew faith, who were imagined to recline now, all labour ended, at a celestial festival in the presence of Jehovah, and in whose reposeful bosom it was the ambition of the devout Jew to find his eternal rest. He spoke as One Who came from the heaven He spoke of, to Whom the reward of the prophets was less a thing of faith than of knowledge; to Whom, therefore, the infinite disproportion between what the prophets had borne on earth, and what they now enjoyed in heaven, made it seem no evil, but a joy, to be a prophet too, and bear for a while a prophet's persecution. No words could have better met the faithless depression of the startled Twelve, who found themselves committed to a future on which they had not counted. To enter into the steps of the long and honoured file of ancestral worthies who were the glory of Israel was much. To have a hope of reaching parallel honour, where their blessed seats

were set in the presence of God, was more. It was most of all, perhaps, to know that what awaited them, if through opprobrium they followed Jesus, was a celestial reward, great in proportion as their sufferings should be great.

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These words of Jesus not only met the momentary need of the Twelve; they have been a stay to His Church at every moment of exceptional persecution. The records of the earliest time show how the dark cloud of heathen and Hebrew hostility which overhung the Church brought into relief this bright bow of promise. In this, the earliest was like all later times of persecution. To men who for Christ's sake have to part with liberty and home, to traverse perils and inhabit wildernesses, to hold life in their hand as a bauble ready to be cast away; to lonely souls, who day by day quiver under the venomous gibe of neighbours, and find that the grace of God has made family and working life to them a bed of thorns; to the well-meaning, who reason with profane and godless men about peace with God, only to have insult and false insinuations and ribaldry flung in their teeth; to all who rebuke earth by exceptional piety, and inherit for their pains the hatred of earth,—this promise stands for ever out, clear and sweet and cheering: 'Great is your

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- reward in heaven.' Those who were never tried may criticise this motive for endurance as at best a selfish one; but the heart of the persecuted is thankful that He Who knew us stooped to our infirmities. Apostolic writings are full of echoes of this word. Peter bade the Hebrew Christians rejoice to partake of Christ's sufferings expressly
- 1 Pet. iv. 13. on this ground, 'that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.'<sup>1</sup>
- Jas. i. 12. When James calls that man, in his Master's language, 'blessed' who endures temptation, it is because 'he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised.' And Paul in his abundant sufferings would not 'faint,' because
- 2 Cor. iv. 16-18. his 'light affliction' was working out 'a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' If any know what it is to be misnamed, or mishandled, or misunderstood, for the sake of loyalty to Jesus and His faith, let them know this, that they walk along the royal road of the Heavenly Kingdom, with the long, long line of all the saints, ay, with the King of saints Himself, before them. Let them know this also, that the faith of saints, which makes them more than content to forfeit earthly praise, which reconciles them to present

<sup>1</sup> The words of Christ in St. Matthew are alluded to by St. Peter in ver. 14, and again in iii. 14.

discredit, which teaches them to sing and triumph in shameful reproach, is a faith in the future based on this promise from the Eternal, that for every insult there shall be an honour, for every blow a kiss, and for every forfeit a reward.

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We now return to the point from which this discussion about the 'reward' promised in the twelfth verse set out. I said that a gracious distribution of final rewards in recompense for sacrifices made on His account, was not foreign to the teachings of our Lord. We have seen how appropriately He used it to sustain the resolution of those men who surrounded Him when He spoke. This, however, is not the ultimate reason why persecution becomes in His Kingdom a beatitude. Jesus did not, as another teacher might have done, treat the world's hostility to His cause as simply an unfortunate accident, a set-off to its blessedness, which called for special compensation. In the eighth Beatitude, it is of persecution itself, not of its future reward, He speaks; and in the very persecution, apart from its reward, He finds a present blessedness. In every one of the previous beatitudes we have discovered a profound inward connection betwixt the moral quality canonized and the blessing

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annexed ; in such sort that the possession of the quality really qualified for the blessing, and drew it after it. This last one is no exception to the same rule. To be persecuted is blessed, not simply because after persecution there shall come a corresponding reward, the hope of which sustains the sufferer now, and the possession of which hereafter will overpay his pains. That may be all that our Lord felt it possible to teach the Twelve when He addressed to them the eleventh and twelfth verses, meant for their need at the moment. It may be all that the persecuted heart can for the most part realize or get heartening from while it is under trial. But the philosophy of Christian blessedness leads us to a deeper thought. Persecution is no accident in Christian life. It is simply inevitable from the collision with evil of Christian righteousness when it becomes positive, especially when it becomes aggressive in the cause of peacemaking. It is the activity of Christian life which lays its own faggots, prepares for itself its own martyrdom. It is when the disciple follows in the wake of the first great Peacemaker, and from the side of God approaches the world's evil with implied rebukes and an open summons to it to repent, submit, and be at peace, that it is most certain

to encounter the world's missiles. A very holy or unworldly life may be itself so telling a rebuke, even though a silent one, as to draw on some meek pure souls dislike, and calumny, and malice. But it is the active, witness-bearing, and missionary type of Christian character which provokes the chief resistance. The Christianity of the wholly unpersecuted must be a Christianity defectively aggressive, which has not advanced sufficiently to the last stage, the stage of peace-making. Nor is this all. Persecution is not simply inevitable as soon as the development of active Christian life leads it into collision with evil; it is an indispensable factor in the very development and perfecting of Christian life. Persecution is not indeed a grace; but persecution is the creator of a grace, as St. James teaches us. 'The trying of your faith,' says he, 'worketh patience,' that is, endurance. 'And,' he adds, 'let this<sup>1</sup> endurance have a perfect work, in order that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting in nothing.' It is not enough, in order to Christian perfection, that the soul attain to the righteousness she hungers after, and be filled with mercy and purity and peace. To have these things in us is much; to endure in them under provocation

<sup>1</sup> See the article in verse 4 : ἡ δὲ ὑπομονή.



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1 Pet. i. 7;  
cf. Wisdom  
of Sol. iii. 6.

is much more. Gold is not only proved to be gold by fire; it is made the finer for it. So the character which Jesus has been calling 'blessed' is not only discovered to be genuine through suffering; it is purged and made mature by suffering. That the graces of Christian life may grow to ripeness and become permanent, enduring, and perfect, they must be practised in the face of difficulty, and under that sun of trial which in our Lord's parable scorched the promising and premature wheat-shoots that sprung up from a shallow soil. It is this, then, in which lies the deepest and truest blessedness of being persecuted. St. Paul understood that these moral benefits to the soul constitute the best ground for rejoicing in afflictions, when he wrote words so profound and

Matt. xiii. 5,  
6; c. ver. 21.

Rom. v. 3, 4.  
See Greek.

so thoroughly in Jesus' spirit as these: *We glory in the tribulations also, knowing, or, because we know, that the tribulation worketh endurance* [exactly what St. James said]; *and the endurance worketh experience*, that is, an approved condition; *and the state of approvedness worketh hope*,—the hope, he means, of a glorious reward to come.

Now, to have all the graces of the higher Christian life, such as mercy, pureness, and peace, developed into constant and reliable elements of character, tested and approved as both

genuine and mature, is finally, in our Lord's words, to possess as one's inward and inalienable possession the very 'kingdom of Heaven.' Thus this marvellous series of beatitudes sweeps round and back to its starting-point. To the 'poor in spirit' He promised at the outset 'the kingdom of Heaven.' He declared it to be 'theirs,' because they were already *its*—its born subjects and citizens. It was theirs to begin with, as the undeveloped gift of divine grace dropped into their begging hand; as a magnificent and right royal alms, an enclosed present from the King, of which the capacious, endless contents were as yet unsuspected and unrealized. Even as the new-born heir of an empire has all his future dignity and prerogative to learn, so the spiritually poor penitent is unconscious of that glory of which He has made him heir, Whose voice already calls him 'blessed.' But in the end, after traversing the descending and ascending steps of Christian experience, the accomplished soldier of righteousness is sent back at the close to practise under fire of the foe, not only his new-won righteousness of peacemaking, pure-heartedness, and mercifulness, but even that humiliation which he learned at first. A second sort of 'poverty' and a more terrible 'mourning'

EIGHTH  
BEATITUDE.  
—  
*Octava tan-  
quam ad  
caput redit.*  
—*Aug.*

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overtake him ; in a sterner school of experience he practises 'meekness.' The old lessons of submission and patience are put to proof by the things which he has to suffer, that he may enter the triumphant kingdom, not doing, but enduring. Blessed, therefore, above all former blessednesses are they whose very righteousness brings on their persecution. Blessed, because through slander and hardship chased out of earthly kingdoms for the heavenly King's sake, they are added to 'the noble army of martyrs,' and admitted to the most splendid rewards of Him Who Himself is 'the Martyr faithful and true.' But in this more blessed still, that the characters of divine likeness, which they have come to wear as sons of God, have been burnt clear and legible in the fire ; that in their most loyal heart of hearts they have painfully set up and gallantly fought through to rival-less supremacy the spiritual reign of God their Royal Father ; and that, as the great Saviour did, so they have 'learned obedience through the things which they have suffered.' Blessed are they, for 'theirs is the kingdom of Heaven !'

So Rev. iii.  
14, Greek.

Heb. v. 8.

**CONCLUSION: SALT AND LIGHT.**

*Ye are the salt of the earth ; but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted ? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick ; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father Which is in heaven.—MATT. v. 13-16.*

*Cf. Luke xi. 33 : No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light.*

## CONCLUSION: SALT AND LIGHT.

**T**HE purpose of the Beatitudes was to describe CONCLUSION.  
the citizens of God's christian kingdom ;  
the purpose of these two Emblems is to describe  
their effect upon unchristian society. The eighth  
Beatitude I called complementary to the main  
body of the seven. It is also transitional ; for it  
leads on both Speaker and hearers to these verses  
which follow.

The world resents the active presence within  
it of a kingdom of God, by persecuting it ; yet  
the world cannot help being deeply affected and  
changed by the kingdom. It is so in two ways.  
First : Whatever good there still is in this evil  
earth, finds itself strengthened and protected  
by the existence in the midst of it of christian  
life. The evil does not so rapidly nor so certainly  
gain upon the good in human history as it would  
have done had God left His earth without a  
Church or Kingdom of Grace ; for Christians  
act upon the world as salt does upon matter

CONCLUSION. — which, though still organized, is dead ; their presence arrests the process of decay, and preserves the sweetness and wholesomeness of the mass. Again : Whatever evil there is in the world is judged by the coming and presence of Christ's kingdom, as darkness is by light. It is rebuked by being exposed. In the presence of a better thing, men see it to be bad. It must either receive enlightenment by changing its nature, or close itself up against the light as a convicted and hopeless enemy of God ; for it is the nature of Christianity to conquer evil by spreading truth and holiness, and the evil that will not be so conquered must hide itself at last.

Now, since the kingdom of Christ has these two important functions to discharge towards the world at large, no citizen of the kingdom may abdicate through cowardice his honourable though dangerous office. The open loyalty of Christ's people, and their consistency to their true ideal of character, are both indispensable to the blessed effect which His kingdom is meant to work upon society. Loyalty, therefore, and consistency, Christians must at all hazards maintain. Persecution will be the penalty. Hard names will be thrown, and hard blows dealt. Yet it is at their peril if either word or stroke of hostility

shall make them either change their distinctive CONCLUSION. character or hide their distinctive testimony. To change their character for fear of the world's dislike, is to forfeit their function of conservators of good and sweeteners of evil. It is to become like salt which can no longer savour. To hide their testimony for fear of rebuke, is to forfeit their function of illuminators of the world, whose light must either turn bad men to goodness, or convict them of hating it. It is to put their 'lamp'<sup>1</sup> beneath a bushel. By how much the influence of Christ's kingdom was meant to be searching, far-spreading, and beneficent, by so much must care be taken that no disciple of His let his influence corrupt or disappear. On the other hand, the more the world persecuted the Church, the greater of course became the risk that Christians would either conform or conceal themselves. For this reason our Lord couches the sentences in which He defines the influence of His disciples, not only in a declarative form, but also in warning and hortatory phrases: not only saying, 'Ye are the salt of the earth,' but

<sup>1</sup> *λύχνος*, in ver. 15 is any portable light, as an open hand-lamp or a lantern. It is rendered 'light' in Matt. vi. 22, Luke xii. 35, John v. 35, 2 Pet. i. 19, and Rev. xxi. 23; elsewhere always 'candle.' The word 'lamp' would be better in every passage where it occurs.



CONCLUSION. also, 'If the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?'—not only, 'Ye are the light of the world,' but also, 'Let your light shine before men.'

Before expounding more fully what these two Emblems teach, let it be remembered how well it became the incarnate Son of God that He should make such common things on His Father's earth preach the eternal truths of His spiritual kingdom. God, as the wise man of later Judaism saw, has made 'all things double one against another;' for He has framed the things which are seen to tell of things unseen, and be the earthly copies of a pattern in the heavens. To unsinful human eyes, this earth would be a Bible writ large and fair on every page of it with messages from its Maker. Even sinful men have, by unknown help from Him Who gives man understanding, deciphered so much of nature's picture-writing, that all races speak in symbolic words borrowed from the facts of matter. It was part of Jesus' work as the supreme Discoverer of hidden truth to help us to a better insight, and before our sin-disordered eyes to unveil the deeper teachings of nature. Nor does He need to draw His lessons from any far-off corner of creation, or from its stupendous and

Ecclus. xlii.  
24; cf. xxxiii.  
15.

Rom. i. 20.  
Cf. Heb. viii.  
5, ix. 23, 24.

Job xxxii. 8.

unusual works. The commonest things of daily life are the most precious teachers, for they lie nearest us, and speak to us most often. Water and bread become sacramental in the hands of Jesus. The emblems of this very Sermon lie in every man's path. The salt and candle of the housewife, birds and lilies, swine and pearls, the gate and the road through it, a tree and its fruit, sand and rock: where could teacher find homelier objects for an infant's lesson? To give these things significance, is to surround all men for ever with mute and ceaseless preachers.

CONCLUSION.  
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Matt. vi. 26-29, vii. 6, 13, 16, 24-27.

The two Emblems before us have something which they teach in common, with something also peculiar to each.

In this their lessons agree: 1. That Christ's disciples have what distinguishes them from other men, as salt differs from the saltless, or light from the dark; 2. That they possess a power of spreading through surrounding society that which distinguishes them, as the savour of salt will spread by contact, or the brilliance of a lamp by its elevation on its stand; and 3. That it is the duty of each disciple to guard this blessed power in such condition that it shall exert its proper influence.

What the characteristic of a Christian is, we

CONCLUSION. have not far to seek. The assemblage of christian attributes, to which Jesus has just been annexing benedictions, makes up that which His disciples have, and other men have not. This assemblage of attributes simply defines a character. It is not phrases, therefore, creeds, shibboleths, badges, or professions, in which the power of a christian life must lie, but in character. Neither is it in any character, but in one distinctively christian in its moral type. To be good or virtuous after some fashions of virtue is not to have christian power; but to be good after this fashion of Christ, with the roots of character thrown far down through spiritual poverty and mourning into a soil of meekness, with abiding desire after divine righteousness for the strong stem of character, with such peculiar fruits on its outmost boughs as mercifulness, purity of heart, and a love to make peace. It is the possession of this essentially christian character—a character neither Hebrew, nor Moslem, nor pagan, not even, in a sense, known to humanity till Jesus became a Man—in which the saltiness of the disciple lies if he is to salt the land, his radiance if he is to light up the world. Though, when Jesus spoke, He spoke to men whom He had just ordained to be the official propagators of His faith through inspired word and

miraculous act, yet the secret of their power He placed in no official act or word; neither, as some say, in a sacramental mystery by consecrated priest; nor, as others say, in written page from apostolic pen; nor, as yet others do, in mere iteration to men's ears of the blessed evangelical call. No, but it was they themselves, in the magic mainly of such a strangely holy and lovely life as hitherto no man had seen; they in the eloquence before all words of 'good works.' From this rare and admirable function of sweetening or enlightening mankind, our King shuts out no age, or sex, or class of His true scholars. He pitches the privilege at that level of *being*, rather than of speaking, on which there is, so to say, neither old nor young, neither male nor female. To be good is the privilege of no order in the Church, nor of any Church in Christendom. Whoever can be, in heart and life, of distinctively christian temper, he is salt and he is light. In his own circle and to what extent he can, that man is a christian power. A little child, a meek maiden, a day-labourer, may be as true a bearer of the savour and the radiance of Jesus Christ as anointed priest before the altar or ordained preacher in the pulpit.

It follows from this universal distribution of

CONCLUSION.

Ver. 16.

Gal. iii. 28.

CONCLUSION. the privilege amongst all our King's subjects, that the duty connected with it is equally universal. Christians are such 'by the grace of God.' They have a power to savour and to enlighten which is given them, or wrought within them, by simple creation from on high; just as the salt or the oil derives from His will its seasoning or illuminating virtue. Out of this gift of divine grace, constituting any soul a Christian, there springs a duty. The Emblems fail us here. Dead unconscious salt and oil act by a law which is not conditioned upon any choice of theirs; whereas the free subjects of God's kingdom underlie a law, not of necessity, but of duty. They owe it to their King and Father to take up the function for which He has made them Christians, and to do it with sedulous eager fidelity. It is not of their own will that their christian character has power to savour society or enlighten the world; yet something hangs upon their will, the doing of which is a condition of the savouring and the enlightenment. Their business is to maintain their own christian character in its distinctiveness on the one hand; and on the other, to give it free and effective exhibition. It lies with themselves to see that Christianity shall neither forfeit in their case

that distinctively christian flavour which gives CONCLUSION.  
it power, nor avoid that conspicuousness which  
is essential to efficiency. At this point, indeed,  
the two Emblems diverge in their practical ap-  
plication; but up to this point they agree. Both  
of them teach us, not this only, that all Christians  
have a divine function and power to perform it;  
but this as well, that on all Christians the duty  
lies to guard this power and provide for its un-  
hindered exercise. Hence the double form of  
our Lord's address: 'What by God's grace ye  
are, that be by your own act.'

In order to bring out that which is peculiar  
in the lesson of each Emblem, let us now look  
more closely at them in succession.

1. *Salt.*

Salt, which Jesus on another occasion called Mark ix. 50.  
'good,' and which both in Hebrew and in Roman  
bywords was praised as next to a necessity of  
human life, was known from the earliest times  
for two chief virtues—its seasoning and its pre-  
serving quality. To put our Lord's comparison  
in its full relief, however, we must add its sacri-  
ficial use in Hebrew worship as well as in the  
rites of heathen antiquity.<sup>1</sup> No offering of cakes

<sup>1</sup> See a copious citation of authorities on all these points in  
Tholuck, *Bergpredigt*, pp. 112–114 (Gotha, 4te Aufl. 1856).

CONCLUSION. or vegetable produce was laid on Jehovah's altar saltless ; perhaps this seasoning was added even to animal sacrifices ; certainly it entered into the composition of the sacred incense. With all this in their minds, Jesus' audience could understand Him to mean no less than this, that His disciples were to act on society (Jewish society, of course, in the first place) as a moral preservative, keeping it from total decay, and fitting it to be an oblation, not distasteful but acceptable, to Jehovah. The thought was far from a new one to the Hebrew mind. Remembering how the world before the flood perished because 'all flesh had corrupted his way,' except one salt particle too minute to preserve the mass ; how ten men like Lot would have saved the cities of the Lower Jordan ; how it marked the extreme ripeness to destruction of the Israel of Ezekiel's day, that even these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, had they been in it, could have delivered 'neither son nor daughter : ' no Jew could miss the point of our Lord's words to His Twelve around Him, 'Ye are the salt of the land.' When He spoke, the corruption of His nation was extreme, as His own sermons show us ; and effete Judaism was fast ripening for its fall. Nay, before His eyes, what ought to have been the salt of the Holy

Lev. ii. 13 ;  
Ezek. xliii.  
24 ; Ex. xxx.  
35, margin.

Gen. vi. 12.

Gen. xviii.  
23 to end.

Ezek. xiv.  
14, 20.

מֶלַח מֶלַח.

See Matt.  
xxiii., Luke  
xi. 39 ff., etc.

Land had utterly lost its savour. Neither as to emblem nor as to fact did our Lord speak at random about salt which loses saltiness. From the careful observations of a recent authority,<sup>1</sup> we now know that the impure salt used in Syria, which is commonly obtained only from marshes or lagoons, is perpetually liable, when lying on the ground or exposed to the weather, to get insipid. Of course nothing can ever make this spoiled salt, salt again. It is literally good for nothing, for 'it destroys all fertility wherever it is thrown;' and is really 'so troublesome,' that 'it is carefully swept up, carried forth, and cast into the street,' as the only place where it can do no harm, there to be 'trodden under foot of men and beasts.'

Palestine had been as a 'cruse,' designed to hold in its elect population a salt to preserve the heathen earth; but its precious deposit had corrupted through contact with the unwholesome

<sup>1</sup> The fact that in ancient times salt did under certain circumstances become savourless, is implied in passages of Josephus and Pliny. The first of the moderns to report an instance of it was Maundrell, who noticed the phenomenon in the plain of Aleppo. Dr. Thomson (*Land and Book*, pp. 381-2, London 1859) has more recently ascertained it to be 'a well-known fact that the salt of this country [Palestine], when in contact with the ground or exposed to rain and sun, does become insipid and useless.' See also, in this connection, Herzog, *Real Encycl. s.v. Salz.*

2 Kings ii.  
20-22.



CONCLUSION. air of Gentile society, till all taste of divine purity was well-nigh gone. Jewish corruption stank at that day even in Gentile nostrils. The false demoralized Judaism of the first century had become a nuisance fit only to be swept out, as it was to be soon after, by the besom of its Roman conqueror into the 'street'—the world's thoroughfare—where it lies 'trodden down' of the nations unto this day.

Cf. Luke  
xxi. 24.

What the whole Hebrew people ought to have been to the world, that their doctors and priests ought to have been to the Hebrew people. The literary and sacerdotal orders were by right the salt of the chosen land. Yet Jesus knew, and His hearers knew, that of all classes of society they were then the worst, with the least taste in them of the grace of God and the most offensive signs of moral corruption. In their room he had now set up His Twelve as a handful of salt, which, if Israel had been repentant, would have preserved both the people and the land. Israel proved to be past salvation. Therefore in Israel's room Jesus planted a few years later His christian churches of the Gentiles, to be a salt in the rotten civilisation of the Greco-Roman earth. Again the salt failed to save that ancient classical world; nay, over great part of old Christendom Chris-

tianity itself grew savourless. Do we not know CONCLUSION.  
how the Apostolic Churches of the East and South, of Asia and Africa, became so corrupt through priestcraft and idol-worship and schism, that in the seventh century the indignant sweep of the Mohammedan sword swept them out of God's House? Did not the saltless Christianity of the fifth and sixth centuries fail to save the Western Empire from the inundation of northern barbarism? The Eastern Church has degenerated into tasteless, ineffectual formalism. Even the stronger Church of the West, which alone retained and carried over into modern Europe some unspoiled salt of the gospel, the men of our own time have seen turn into the corrupt thing called the later Ultramontane Papacy. As for those Reformed Churches which three hundred years ago proved themselves a right pungent salt to Teutonic Europe, they are at this hour upon their trial; while the world waits to see whether the salt which was in them has in turn so lost its savour, that they too shall prove unequal to deliver the nations from the decay which threatens them through secular unbelief, materialism, and social anarchy.

Looked at on a large scale, the prospect offered by the great churches of the world is thus dis-

CONCLUSION. appointing enough. Yet in point of fact, ever since Jesus sowed Christianity among men, His faith has kept at least some portions of mankind from the unmentionable grossness of, let us say, classical Greece. It has been slowly elevating the average level of civilised nations over Christendom. It has taught the world to respect some of its own characteristic virtues, as its humility, its meekness, its self-denial, and its mercy. It has been to some extent to all its generations a sweetening, seasoning, and anti-septic thing. It seems, however, very plain, and if so, it is certainly instructive, that this has been done less through those great organizations which we call national or other churches, than through the virtues of individual men. Ecclesiastical corporations have generally shared the fate of other corporations: they have suffered from time and weathering till their spirit evaporated and they grew unfit for their original uses. But never has Christendom wanted at its worst a sprinkling of pure and gracious souls, impregnated through and through with the very essence of Christ's life and teaching; true 'children of the heavenly King,' merciful, pure of heart, makers of peace; souls on whom not one but eight beatitudes did rest, and of whom the

removed King could always say, 'Ye are the salt of the earth.' Through their quiet and unobtrusive influence it has been that the downward tendency of society has been kept in check. When only a catastrophe could clear the corrupt lands, they proved a seed of wholesomeness to be the beginning of a better future; and they in homely and lowly nooks of social life have often conserved sweetness, purity, and nobleness of heart, when in the high places alike of State and Church all was already rottenness. To individual and private Christians, therefore, who have secretly learned the lessons of His beatitudes, and are salted with His salt, the Lord Jesus looks to keep this land and nation sweet. They will keep it sweet, if only they keep themselves salt. Let Christians guard well the christian qualities of their character, nor suffer what is distinctively Christlike to evaporate from their life through the touch or the air of the world, till society has reduced them to its own savourless style of easy and conventional virtue. To be intensely, characteristically like Christ, both in inward temper and in outer life, is the secret of spiritual power. The more any one has of the seven blessed marks we have heard Jesus praise, the more salutary and preservative will his presence prove to society.

CONCLUSION.

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**CONCLUSION.** Silently, unintentionally, he will be a centre of influence to the circle in which he moves, causing men to feel that christian faith is a power, because it is the generator of a holy and wholesome life. A Christian, on the other hand, with nothing characteristically christian in him, a savourless, inoperative, un-Christlike Christian, such as we have among us but too many, who might as well be called by any other name,—such a man shall one day be swept clean out at God's house-door, to be 'trodden under foot' with a right hearty contempt, even by those who have never been anything else but frankly and openly ungodly.

*2. Light.*

Salt acts secretly ; and the lesson of the first Emblem is to preserve that inward and secret quality of character which alone tells savingly upon society. Lest any one, however, should press this hidden power of christian goodness so far as to think it allowable for Christ's disciples to bury themselves out of sight, through some excess of modesty, or through a certain cowardly dread for the persecution which publicity might entail, Jesus adds a second Emblem, the very essence of which is visibility, prominence, and publicity. There is no doubt but He meant, by

calling His Twelve the world's light, to indicate CONCLUSION.  
how His Church was to be a centre of observation  
and a gathering point for all eyes. It is the  
brightest reflector on earth of Him Who is 'the John viii. 12,  
light of the world,' 'which lighteth every man,' i. 9.  
and therefore it is the point of highest illumina-  
tion, or, as He explained, the most conspicuous  
object on the earthly horizon. Pointing, perhaps,  
as He spoke to the white citadel of the city Safed,  
which, lifted on the top of its tall round hill,  
shimmered in sunshine many miles to the north-  
ward, He said, 'A city that is set on an hill  
cannot be hid.' He was thinking surely of an-  
other City, set also on 'a great and high mountain,'  
which was to descend in vision before the eyes,  
then grown aged, which now glistened with  
young fire, of the youngest and dearest of these  
Twelve—a City 'having the glory of God' like Rev. xxi. 10,  
the light of 'a jasper stone, clear as crystal' 11.  
Even now, though her light is muffled and ob-  
scured by sin, so that few eyes see her beauty,  
the 'Jerusalem which is above,' the Church of Gal. iv. 26.  
God, is to some extent God's earthly Light-Giver 1 Peter ii. 9, Rev. i. c. Cf. In Memoriam  
—a 'Phosphor' at least, foretelling dawn—

**‘Behind thee comes the greater light!’**

Or, if you like to leave this ambitious image for a homelier one: This world, with all its darkened

CONCLUSION. societies, is but God's large house, in which so many of His children cry in the night but never see or find their Father; and as housewives do not kindle the household lamp at evening only to turn over it the big wheat measure to hide it or to quench it, but set it uncovered on its lamp-stand, that it may shed a cheerful gleam through all the room, so has our Heavenly House-Father, in mercy to His still darkened children, placed His saints on their conspicuous elevation of church membership, that their clear light of gospel knowledge and their reflected radiance of holy affections and Christlike deeds might spread abroad, by open profession and unconcealed well-doing, a blessed illumination. It is not that the Christian need pant after notoriety, or vain-gloriously flash his little spark where he has no business. The House-Master Who kindles us must place us, one on a loftier and one on a lower lamp-stand, as it pleaseth Him. For us it is enough that we be content with the height or conspicuousness of our place, and cheerfully let such light as we have be seen as it may be, neither ambitiously envious nor timorously unfaithful. We are not free to descend from the stand on which He has put us, nor to hide our Christianity because we are looked at, any more than we are

free to cease from shining because there are few CONCLUSION.  
to see us, or to flare the higher when many  
applaud. This command is no encouragement to  
a vaunting and self-advertising religion. There  
is a Christianity which offends christian modesty  
by theatrical and sensational exhibitions of itself,  
which parades its attractions and trumpets its  
performances. But this command takes for  
granted, as He had a right to take for granted,  
that each Christian would shine as cheerfully in  
good works though there were never a soul to  
notice or approve, as when the house is full. As  
I have seen the glowworm at late evening, by  
the silent side of an empty English lane, mount  
some tall spike of grass and turn up its tiny  
lamp, content to hang, head downwards, itself  
unseen, so that the exquisite soft green light  
which God had given it might be visible in its  
loveliness; so may one find in this world's lowly  
and unfrequented paths Christ's light-bearers,  
who shed each his own sweet love-light round a  
narrow circle of the dark, that the wayfarer who  
sees may praise, not his unsightly and, sooth to  
say, concealed self, but that great Father in  
Heaven Who lit this faint taper upon earth, even  
as He lit the nobler fires which burn far up in  
heaven. But just as I have shut the poor glow-



CONCLUSION. worm in a dark box or under an inverted dish,  
 — yet found that it spent all its radiance there un-  
 seen, only for sake of love, and because shine it  
 must; so will the true soul, whom his Lord  
 shall chance to imprison from shedding light on  
 any human eye, rejoice no less to let his devout  
 Cf. Matt. vi. affections and gracious deeds be seen of Him  
 1-18. Who looks through the densest cover, and knows  
 how to bestow an open reward.

Since, then, Jesus hath taught us that to be  
 visible is no accident in Christian life, but the  
 very condition of its usefulness, let us each with  
 patient tendance trim our inward lamp, that in  
 our hearts there may be the light of a sevenfold  
 blessed grace: then let us not be ashamed with  
 modest faithfulness to let that silent efficacious  
 light of christian character tell, of us, that we  
 2 Cor. iv. 6. have been shone upon by the face of Jesus; and  
 1 John i. 5. of your Lord, that He is Light, and that in Him  
 there is no darkness at all.

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